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The Evangelism of Jesus

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FOREWORD

Both pastors and laymen have expressed a desire that an outstanding book on evangelism and the Bible be made available in quantities at low-cost for wide distribution in their churches. There has been a felt need for a book that, in brief compass, touches the wellsprings of Christian evangelism at their source.

How could this desire be met better than by this little volume on *The Evangelism of Jesus* by an outstanding Bible scholar and theologian with an evangelistic outlook and passion?

Here is a volume that those who love Christ and want to be witnesses for him will take delight in reading. Every member of a Commission on Membership and Evangelism will be benefitted by it. In fact, it is a book for every layman.

Here is a volume that can be used both for personal reading and for church groups, midweek services, informal Bible groups, fellowship groups, Fishermen's Clubs, and all kindred groups who witness for Christ—including "The Twelve" in the new "Decade for Dynamic Discipleship."

As most Methodist churches have an annual mission study book, so this book might be used as the first of an annual evangelism study book, sponsored by the Commission on Membership and Evangelism.

We suggest that it will be a rewarding experience for a layman to read this volume slowly, a chapter at a time, looking up all scriptural references. Then, with the scriptural references fresh in mind, a quick re-reading of the chapter will be of great worth. All scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise stated.

THE EDITORS

COVER PICTURE

"Christ and Nicodemus" by Michaelson

Painted for General Board of Evangelism, 1945

Theme picture for 1946 Year of Evangelism in
the Crusade for Christ

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INTRODUCTION

The Master's Great Concern

The great concern of the Master in his specific dealings with people was to draw them into the kingdom of God. He wanted them so to realize who they were that they would identify themselves as lost as long as they were separated from the heavenly Father. His every effort was directed toward making people aware of the reality and finality of the will of God to the end that they might enter into the life of faith, obedience, and fellowship for which they were created. His whole mission, therefore, was that of being the good news of the kingdom of God and of proclaiming it.

To be in the presence of another person was, for Jesus, to strive to make that person conscious of the presence of God and to awaken in him the sense of the reality and absoluteness of the demands of God. He never missed an opportunity to do this.

One of the most moving thoughts that a Christian can have is that the Son of God himself, as the living expression of the will of God, was the master-evangel. Jesus so completely identified himself with the purpose of God for mankind that he had to use all of his energies in drawing people toward God.

No man can properly be compared with Jesus; for he was the Son of God and the Son of Man. Yet we know that genius is marked by singleness of purpose; and the more nearly a person's energies are coordinated toward one supreme objective, the more nearly does he enter into the dimensions of genius. David Hume, as a boy in his teens, was consumed by the passion to make a name for himself in literary productions. John D. Rockefeller, as a youth, entertained the fixed purpose of

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making a fortune. Thomas Edison was set in motion by the overwhelming desire to invent.

Jesus had a supreme purpose, one mighty objective which was to him a consuming passion: to bring persons to God. Just as the vast energies of God are coordinated toward the one sublime end of realizing the new society where righteousness dwells, so was it with Jesus. Jesus as Son of Man and Son of God, was a manifestation in the flesh of God's great purpose. The one passion of Jesus was to be God's evangel.

1. The Master's Person-to-Person Ministry

- ✓ Jesus was not primarily a mass evangelist. On occasions he did minister to vast multitudes (Matt. 8:1; 9:36; 14:15-21; 15:32-39; Mk. 3:7-10; 6:31-46; Lk. 6:17); and from time to time he taught in town and village synagogues as well as in the temple at Jerusalem (Matt. 9:35; Jn. 18:20). But this was not the most characteristic feature of his ministry. Nearly all of his recorded life was spent in dealing with people one by one, or in small groups. It was a primary concern of the Master to carry out his eternal mission by working with people in the intimacies of face-to-face relationships.

The four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, might well be likened to portrait galleries in a museum of fine arts in which massive scenes of multitudes are conspicuous by their rarity. The gospel materials, for the most part, portray the Master as he deals with individuals or with a handful of people.

Taking Matthew 8 and 9 as illustrative of this, we find one scene after another where Jesus deals in person-to-person relationships. There was the leper who knelt before him and asked for cleansing (8:2-4); there was the centurion pleading in behalf of his servant (8:5-13); there was Peter's mother-in-law, sick of a fever, touched by the Master's hand (8:14-15); there was the man spoken of simply as "a scribe" who said he would

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follow Jesus wherever he went (8:19); there was the scene of Jesus and his disciples in the little boat caught in a storm on the Sea of Galilee (8:23-27); there were the two demoniacs on the other side of the Sea (8:28-32). There was the palsied man made whole (9:1-8); there was Matthew who was called from his place of business to be a disciple and who obeyed (9:9); there were Jesus and the twelve having dinner in a house with a group of tax collectors and sinners (9:10-13); there was the conversation with the disciples of John the Baptist about fasting (9:14-17); there was the ruler who came pleading for the life of his daughter who had just died (9:18-19); there was the woman with an issue of blood who touched the hem of the Master's garment (9:20-22); there were the two blind men who received their sight (9:27-31); there was the dumb demoniac restored to normalcy (9:32-33); and there was the request that the disciples pray for more laborers to do God's work (9:36-38).

It is true that there are various chapters in the four Gospels which treat almost entirely of the teachings of Jesus. But even these further illustrate the Master's determination to confront people with God in the face-to-face situations of life. It is also true that there are chapters which treat primarily of the passion of our Lord. But these, too, disclose the way in which Jesus used every occasion, every personal contact, to show people the implications of the kingdom of God. In the light of the gospel records, then, it is clear that Jesus' methods of evangelism were confined primarily to ways of communicating the reality of God's presence and power to individuals or to persons in small groups.

2. The Message of Jesus

The message of Jesus, though not in itself a method of evangelism, was essential to the effectiveness of all that he said and

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did. The Master entertained significant beliefs in relation to which his entire ministry is to be understood.

He was thoroughly familiar with the Scriptures, and he knew them to be the medium for communicating to man the purpose of God in creation. God created to realize his kingdom. People were chosen to have an important role in the formation of that kingdom. To help man enter into the life for which he was made, God, through his chosen servant Abraham, determined to prepare the way for the Savior of the world. This preparation was carried forward from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, through Moses and David, through the prophets and John the Baptist.

Jesus knew, as many first-rate scholars now declare, though he did not often make it known to others, that he was the promised Messiah, the Suffering Servant, through whom the deeper purpose of God in creating the universe and in making human history possible was being realized. This accounts for his references to himself as the embodiment of the prophetic utterances on the Suffering Servant. Jesus knew that he was born to die, and that in suffering and dying he would fulfill his eternal mission.

He knew also that upon the completion of his earthly mission the Holy Spirit would carry forward the important work of magnifying him and of making his atonement available to people continuously within the community of believers. And a considerable portion of his ministry was devoted to getting across to the inner circle of his followers—to the disciples—who he really was. But while they received glimpses of the truth now and then (Matt. 16:13-18; 17:1-8), their understanding was so mingled with counteracting thoughts that they were unable to reach a consistently sound comprehension of the Master's person and mission until Pentecost.

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This was the message which at every turn came to living expression in the ministry of Jesus. It was later adopted by the Church because Jesus himself taught it and embodied it in his own activities. The Holy Spirit, therefore, guided the Church in carrying forward and making real what Jesus himself had communicated. This was the kind of living divine truth which could not possibly be comprehended within the framework of man's worldly wisdom. It was supernatural in character and had to be made manifest, with the assistance of the historical events of Israel's history and Jesus' life, to those who had the eyes and ears of faith.

For this reason, Jesus told his disciples that the realities about himself were not seen by the religious leaders of his day, but were to be comprehended by those who could see through the eyes of faith. "But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Matt. 13:16, 17).

It is evident now that Jesus combined two things in his life's work. He confronted people with the kingdom of God by every means at hand; and, at the same time, he was carrying out his eternal mission pertaining to people of all generations. But since he could never have completed this mission as Savior without expressing his unfaltering concern for the souls of people during his earthly ministry, his methods of evangelism are always to be regarded as models which his disciples of all ages are to follow.

3. Jesus' Methods of Evangelism Summarized

Jesus sought to get across the realities of the kingdom of God by teaching, preaching, healing, and example. Yet it is not enough to say that he taught, preached, healed, and demon-

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strated by example. While true, this does not furnish specific guidance. We require identification of those methods in his teaching, preaching, and living which he used for the purpose of setting in motion the profounder processes within the depths of the human heart. To be sure, no attempt to understand these methods must lead us to overlook the greatness of the one who used them.

Unutterably greater than the particular strategies was the person who acted in and through them. His very presence gave glory and effectiveness to his methods. He himself was the most significant factor in his approaches to people. Nevertheless, we may profit much by taking a careful look at certain specific strategies that the Master used; and it would surely be a mark of Christian wisdom to carry forward our own witness by first sitting at the feet of Jesus and learning of him.

Without attempting to be exhaustive, we may point to the following methods which figured significantly in the Master's dealings with people: (1) he used the Scriptures; (2) he used everyday experiences; (3) he asked key questions; (4) he went straight to the point; (5) he confronted people with responsibility, lostness and judgment; (6) he used the ministry of healing; (7) he associated with all kinds of people; (8) he led people into a right understanding; (9) he enlisted others in planned evangelism; and (10) he gave himself.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What was the primary concern of the Master?
2. What passages indicate that Jesus was interested in dealing with large groups of people?
3. For the most part was Jesus' ministry devoted to mass evangelism or to personal evangelism?
4. Who did Jesus understand himself to be in relation to the total purpose of God?

CHAPTER I

JESUS USED THE SCRIPTURES

1. Jesus Viewed the Scriptures as Authoritative

Jesus viewed the Scriptures as authoritative and he used them frequently to convince his hearers. This is particularly evident in the Gospel of Matthew. Again and again, he led up to his quotations from the Scriptures with the familiar words, "It is written" (Matt. 4:4, 6, 10; 21:13). These words were meant to convey the thought that all doubts and debates about the matter were to end. Jesus recognized that certain regulations in the Law were to be given their profounder spiritual meaning (Matt. 5:21-48); and he knew that there were moral injunctions which had to be laid aside for more excellent ways (Matt. 5:28-39, 43-45). But he never questioned the final authority of the true import of the Scriptures (see especially Matt. 5:17-19). This is evident even in his own inmost struggles when by quoting key passages he banished the tempter (Lk. 4:1-12). It is further seen in his use of Scripture when he cleansed the temple (Mk. 11:17).

The primary reason for the Master's frequent use of the Scriptures was that he knew that the very purpose of God for people had been made manifest in the persons and events presented there. At the same time, he was fully aware that these writings were also regarded as the word of God by the devout people of his day. So he made the most effective use of them in his preaching and teaching.

Jesus was so thoroughly versed in the Law and the Prophets, and so committed to their authority, that nearly everything he said was intended to be understood in the light of them. Even

when his teachings were not direct quotations, they had their total meaning in the thoughts, images, and events which were derived from the Old Testament. Recent Biblical scholarship has made this fact more clear than ever before among careful students of the Bible. Jesus spoke the words in the Sermon on the Mount against the background of Moses and the Prophets. When John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus whether or not he was the Christ, Jesus interpreted for them the meaning of his ministry of healing and compassion in the light of what the prophets had spoken (Matt. 11:1-6).

2. Jesus' Teaching Was to Be Understood in Relation to the Old Testament

The Master's key words and phrases were given their deeper meaning because of the rich storehouse of divine revelation in the Old Testament. For example, Jesus captured the attention of people by inaugurating his ministry with the words, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk. 1:15. R.S.V.) And he sent the twelve disciples out to deliver the same message (Matt. 10:7). This reference to the kingdom immediately interested the people because for many generations they were taught to expect the coming of the kingdom. This was a part of their prayers in the synagogue; it was at the heart of the thinking of every good Jew. And it had profound meaning because of the total background of the Old Testament where God had revealed himself as Creator, Provider, Deliverer, and Establisher of the promised kingdom.

From beginning to end, the Old Testament affirmed or assumed that God alone was the Creator (Gen. 1-2; Job 38-42; Ps. 8, 33, 104; Isa. 40-45). In contrast to everything else, he alone was King. As the Psalmist said,

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“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place
in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.”

(Ps. 90:1-2)

The Jewish Scriptures also declared that this great Creator was the continuing Lord of all that he had made. The same God who made heaven and earth preserved these by his providential care in order to realize the kingdom.

“The Lord is King for ever and ever. . .” (Ps. 10:16). He has carried forward his work as Creator by reigning as “the King of all the earth” (Ps. 47:7).

In the Old Testament the thought of God as Creator and Ruler is not presented primarily to answer man’s intellectual questions but to satisfy his deep longings for forgiveness and new life with God. For this reason, God has revealed his determination to create and preserve man in order to form the new society in which all shall obey God. To this end, God involved himself with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with Moses, David, and the Prophets. There was, then, among the Jews a continuing sense of the deliberate determination of God to establish his kingdom forever. This, they felt, was promised through Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18), through Moses (Deut. 18:15, 18), through David (2 Sam. 7:13, 16), and through the Prophets (Isa. 9:7; Jer. 23:5-8; Ezek. 34:23-24; Hosea 3:5; Dan. 7:13-14; etc). God had deliberately chosen to involve himself with the people of Israel in order to realize his great kingdom. These were the thoughts which kept stirring within the hearts of the people at the time of Jesus.

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3. Jesus Communicated by Using What Was Already Deeply Felt

Then Jesus came preaching that the kingdom of God is at hand. This is to say that Jesus gathered up into his message the deepest hopes and longings of the people. He started many to thinking with him because he knew and used what was already a profound part of their experience. They had a general familiarity with and a great respect for their Scriptures. And Jesus made his appeal on the basis of what was already deeply felt. This is particularly evident, for example, when he said, "Have you not read in the Scriptures:

"The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner . . .?" (Matt. 21:42)

It is significant for us today that the power of Jesus' message was partly attributable to the preparation which had already been made in the hearts of those who heard him. To those who knew the story of Lot and his wife, the strong words of the Master could find their mark (Lk. 17:26-32). To those who knew something about Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19), the Master's reference to these wicked places as more favored than their own cities became a stinging indictment (Matt. 10:15; 11:23). Those who believed John the Baptist to be a prophet were all the more impressed when Jesus spoke of him as the new Elijah (Matt. 11:14). Against the background of the Old Testament, the following words of Jesus struck with a mighty force: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). The phrase, "Son of Man," occurs 81 times in the Gospels and in every instance Jesus used it of himself. While it is true that he gave a new

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meaning to it when he identified it with himself as the Suffering Messiah, it is also true that this could not have had any profound significance apart from the total background of the Old Testament. For even though the disciples at first did not understand this, it became, in the light of the Old Testament, at least possible for some to comprehend the meaning of the sufferings of Jesus as the divine strategy for inaugurating the new era of grace.

This is why Jesus presented this teaching to his disciples by saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon; they will scourge him and kill him, and on the third day he will rise" (Lk. 18:31-33; see also Mk. 10:45).

The plain fact is that Jesus had such a profound awareness of the authority of the Scriptures and such a passion to communicate effectively that again and again he referred to persons, places and events of the Old Testament in order to make his point. When certain scribes and Pharisees wanted a sign from the Master, he answered them out of their common heritage by referring to Jonah and Nineveh (Matt. 12:38-41; 16:1-4). He used Noah (Lk. 17:26-27), Moses (Mk. 12:26-27; Jn. 3:14), the Ten Commandments (Matt. 15:4-6; 19:16-19), David (Matt. 12:3-6; 22:41-45), and the prophets (cf. Matt. 15:7-9; 23:29-32; Mk. 13:14) to confront people with the realities of the spiritual life. He enriched his stories, such as the one about the rich man and Lazarus, by references to Abraham and his descendants (Lk. 16:19-31). He enjoined people to look toward the future kingdom as the setting where people shall be together with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the prophets (Lk. 13:28). It is not surprising, therefore, to find him mak-

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ing the serious charge against the Sadducees that they "know neither the scriptures nor the power of God" (Mk. 12:24).

4. Jesus' Use of the Scriptures in Personal Evangelism

Perhaps there is no better illustration of the Master's use of the Scriptures in evangelism than in his effort to win a certain lawyer who asked him, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Lk. 10:25-37) And Jesus answered, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" The lawyer then gave the right reply, for he quoted the commandment concerning man's love for God which is found in Deuteronomy 6:5. And Jesus said, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." But the man wanted to justify himself, so he asked, "And who is my neighbor?" Then Jesus made the answer plain by telling the story of the Good Samaritan.

For our immediate purpose here, the significant point is that Jesus began with Scriptures. He asked the lawyer what he found there with reference to his quest for eternal life, and he confirmed the authority of the word of God by a compelling story.

5. Lessons for the Church Today

Jesus used the Scriptures to draw people to God. This speaks volumes. If he did it, we are all the more called upon to do it; for he could speak out of his own authority, while we have only the authority of the Bible and that of our Christian experience. Moreover, since we have not only the Old Testament but also the New, we are under the further compulsion to use the Bible in every way possible for the purpose of drawing people into the kingdom of God. The determination of God to reveal his secret purpose for creating the universe and for placing finite souls in it has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the whole Bible needs to be used in bearing witness to this revelation and

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to the power of the living Christ in the hearts of men and women. The Old Testament prepares the way for the coming of the Savior. The New Testament identifies him and discloses his nature and power. The New Testament also looks into the future and reveals the determination of God "to unite all things" in Christ, "things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10). For it is the revealed purpose of God to give him all authority (Matt. 11:27) because his name is above every name (Phil. 2:9).

Therefore, Christian evangelists today are without a message unless they share with others what has been authoritatively disclosed in the Bible. Furthermore, if Jesus thought it well to use specific verses for drawing people to God, Christian evangelists today—which means all Christians—should also follow this practice. There are key verses which probe deeply into the hearts of men. There are verses that warn, that promise, that light the way, that stir up the deeper movements of the human spirit. Not to use them in the effort to draw people to God is to make a blunder of the first magnitude.

To be sure, it is always possible to quote the great verses and passages of the Bible in a mechanical way. This is fatal to effective communication. Jesus never did this; and he would expect us to avoid such an obvious mistake.

On the human side, the most compelling reason for the use of the Scriptures in the Christian witness is that multitudes of people already have a deep-seated conscious or unconscious respect for the Bible. Even when they have not read it, they still feel the sense of its authority. Nearly everyone is aware of the force of a conversation which comes as a witness to something which is not merely human. The word of the living God penetrates into the human soul by bearing witness through the Holy Spirit to its own authority. All effective evangelism involves the judicious use of the Scriptures. Every effective witness will

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include the encouragement to look up key verses and meditate prayerfully upon them. For God honors his word. The Holy Spirit illuminates it and brings it home to the hearts of people. As Isaiah said,

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and return not thither but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater.
so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and prosper in the thing for which I sent it”
(Isaiah 55:10-11)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why did Jesus frequently use passages of Scripture in order to reach people?
2. Why is it even more important for us to use passages from the Bible in evangelism?
3. Is there a danger of becoming merely mechanical in our use of Bible verses in personal evangelism?
4. What are some of the values of asking people to look up certain passages for themselves?

SOME SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS

1. God has chosen to reveal his purpose in and through the Book that tells the story of his salvation.
2. This Book must be used because Jesus Christ requires us to do so.
3. The Bible must be understood and used also because the human heart is prepared in advance to respond to its truth.
4. The Holy Spirit will always work with us to illuminate the great passages of the Bible and to bring them home to people.

CHAPTER II

JESUS USED EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES

One of the most beautiful characteristics of the Master was his simplicity. He took the profoundest things and made them plain. We know, of course, that on certain occasions he did not want the meaning of his message to get across to *all* who were present; for his time had not yet fully come (see Matt. 13:9-17; 16:20; 17:9). Jesus knew also that it was not given to all men to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:11). But in his efforts to draw people into the kingdom, he used words, incidents and stories that everyone could understand.

When he first began to teach, the people were impressed with what he said, "and all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. . ." (Lk. 4:22). This shows that they understood his message. When he spoke at Nazareth and offended many people there, they put him out of the city and wanted to throw him over a cliff (Lk. 4:24-30). This too shows that they understood what he said.

1. Key Words from Daily Life

The determination of the Master to reach his hearers is nowhere more evident than in the words which he drew out of the vocabulary of daily life. He spoke of hunger (Lk. 6:21), of weeping (6:21), of hatred (6:22), of being rich or poor (6:20, 24), of rewards (6:23-24), of enemies (6:27, 35), of turning the other cheek (6:29), of being merciful (6:36), of God as Father (6:36), of judging others (6:37), of giving and receiving (6:38), of the speck in the other fellow's eye and the beam in one's own (6:41-42), of good and bad trees (6:43-44), of figs and thorns and grapes and bramble bushes (6:44),

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of good and evil men (6:45), of houses built on solid rock and those built on soft ground (6:48-49).

In John's Gospel we find the Master reaching out for people by using some of the most deeply meaningful words of daily life. He took the universal fact of birth and spoke to Nicodemus about the New Birth (3:1-13). He took water and thirst and used them to illustrate the deep realities of the spirit to a Samaritan woman (4:6-26). He spoke of the food which endures to eternal life (6:27) and of the bread "which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world" (6:33). And when he was finished speaking the people said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always" (6:34). Then Jesus went on to say, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger" (6:35). Jesus spoke of himself as the light of the world (8:12). Everyone knows the difference between light and darkness. He also referred to himself as the door through which the sheep could enter (10:7), and as the good shepherd who gives his life for his sheep (10:11). He used the allegory of the vine, the husbandman, the branches, and the fruit (15:1-8), thus beginning where people were in their daily life and work.

It was no accident that the Master turned such everyday words into instruments of evangelism. He thought upon these matters. He prayed about them. He was set in motion by the desire to win people; so he used ways of communicating with them that they could understand. He started with them where they were, with birth, life, water, bread, light, shepherd, vines and branches and fruit, and then he turned these simple words into deep spiritual meanings. It was the Master's nature to do this. He brought to every occasion a presence prepared in advance for it. He turned the coins of this world into the treasures of God's heavenly kingdom. And every key word became an instrument for evangelism.

2. References to the Day's Work

Work is the most important part of life, and he who has no interest in the activities of people when they are engaged in making a living is not really interested in people. Jesus not only used key words out of the language of daily life; but he also brought his teachings home to people through repeated references to their daily work. This was one of his primary methods of reaching them.

He saw the farmer at work and used his activities to get across his message (Matt. 9:37; 13:3-23, 24-30; Lk. 9:62; Jn. 4:35). He watched the women make bread and spoke of the kingdom of God in terms of the leaven hid in three measures of meal (Mk. 8:14-21). He observed the merchant and used his work to speak of the kingdom (Matt. 13:45-46). The fishermen's activities in the Sea of Galilee caught his eye and he turned them to his special purpose (Matt. 13:47-48; Lk. 5:4-7). He noticed the shepherds on the hills and in the valleys and took from them the unforgettable story of the lost sheep (Lk. 15:4-7). He appreciated the work of those who built houses by using their procedures to express spiritual truth (Lk. 6:47-49; 14:28-30). He saw that the householder needed laborers so he found in this another way of talking about the kingdom (Matt. 20:1-16). The perplexing work of the landowner in relation to his tenants became an effective instrument for disclosing the heartache of God (Lk. 20:9-16). Jesus observed that some men were entrusted with the money and goods of other men, so he brought this to bear upon man's accountability to God (Matt. 25:14-30; Lk. 12:41-48; 16:1-12; 19:12-26). He recognized the work of those who govern people and made it serve his ends (Lk. 14:31-32); he used the respect they showed to Caesar to call for obedience and loyalty to God (Mk. 12:14-17).

Jesus made it his business to observe carefully the activities of people in making a living, and he drew from this rich store-

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house of materials some of his most effective stories. By this means he combined inherent interest and graphic illustration to the end that people might respond to the call of God to obedience and faith.

3. Illustrated by Jesus' Method of Winning the Samaritan Woman

This is perfectly illustrated in the winning of the Samaritan woman (John 4:6-26). Picture the scene. Jesus left Judea for Galilee, and on the way he had to go through Samaria. When he came to a place in the province of Samaria called Sychar—which is very near the city of Samaria—he stopped to rest beside Jacob's well. He was weary from the journey and sat down beside the well. As he sat resting there, a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus asked her for a drink. This took the woman by surprise; for Jews were not supposed to have any dealings with Samaritans. Moreover, Jewish men were not to converse in public places with women, least of all with a Samaritan woman. So the woman asked Jesus how it was that he, a Jew, could ask her for a drink.

Then Jesus turned the conversation to spiritual realities. He said, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water" (4:10). In observing Jesus' method of personal evangelism here, we are struck with the fact that his words fitted naturally into the immediate experience and purpose of the woman. She had come to the well to fulfill a specific mission, namely, to draw water and take it home with her. This was a regular feature of her life and work. The conversation of Jesus began where she was, with activities in which she had an immediate interest. She probably carried on her work during this part of the conversation without even stopping her routine procedures of letting down the bucket and drawing

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it up filled with water. Then she said to Jesus, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water?" (4:11) After a pause, she became almost insulting to Jesus, as if to say, "Who do you think you are?" For she asked, "Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" (4:12)

Jesus answered by showing her what he meant. "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (4:13-14). This she wanted, so she said, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw" (4:15).

The Master had now captured her interest, and even though she had not really understood what Jesus was talking about, a deep sense of longing had been awakened. He asked her to go and call her husband and return to the well. Whereupon she answered that she had no husband. Then Jesus told her about her own life, saying, ". . . you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband. . ." (4:18). Here the Lord enabled her to take a good look at the kind of person she had been during her life. This pierced deeply into her heart, but she did not show it in her next remark. Seeking to shift the topic of conversation to an impersonal theological question, she said, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (4:19-20). Jesus answered her question by gathering it up into the larger meaning of belonging to God. He would not let this occasion degenerate into an argument about where to worship God. It was not really a question of here or there but of whom. He told her that the hour had arrived for the true worshipers to worship the Father

"in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him" (4:23). Nevertheless, to keep the historical connections of God's solution clear, Jesus did say that "Salvation is from the Jews" (4:22).

Like all Samaritans, she too expected the Messiah to come and she told Jesus this because his words suggested the beginning of a new era in spiritual things. She said, "When he comes, he will show us all things" (4:25). Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he" (4:26). She left her water jar and returned to the city and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (4:29). Multitudes came to see Jesus and to hear what he had to say. They asked him to remain with them, so he stayed two days. The Samaritan woman and many others believed in him as the Savior of the world (4:41-42).

There is not in the four Gospels a more significant account of the Master's method of personal evangelism than this story. And it discloses his deliberate determination to take a life where it is and to lead it into the very presence of God.

4. Some Lessons for the Church Today

In Jesus' method of discovering in everyday life the words and illustrations for communicating the things of God, there are several specific lessons for the Church today.

First, this calls for a careful study of common words which can really communicate spiritual truth. There are, of course, many everyday words which fall dead whenever they are turned to this purpose. They lack depth of significance; they are not close enough to the vital elements of life to be the most effective instruments. We should never minimize the choice of a word. The Chinese have a saying, familiar to us all, that one picture is worth a thousand words. This has a truth in it, but it misses something that goes deeper. A word is the great instrument for

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communication among people. Language is the system that enables all human beings to share in the common world of meanings. Words are therefore of utmost importance. Jesus knew this. So, out of deep reflection and prayer, he used those words that could be the most effective in penetrating into the human heart.

"Hunger" is certainly a key word. The Master used it. It still carries with it a depth of meaning capable of expressing profound spiritual truth. "Thirst" is another such word. Both of these have to do with continuing experiences, mild or intense, which are of the very stuff of life. A man once said to his boy in college who was doing very ordinary work, "Son, you have not yet reached the stage where you are hungry for knowledge; there must be the hunger for it. Then the rest will come." It took hold, and the boy began to distinguish himself as a student. The words "hunger" and "thirst" also bring to mind certain universal and deep life-processes which are as inescapable as they are real. Deep in the human heart, as in the heart of that disreputable Samaritan woman, is the hunger and thirst for the Savior. Whether it is identified by anyone or not, it is as real and as persistent as the hunger for food and the thirst for water.

A second lesson is implied in this, namely, that we should understand clearly what we intend to get across by means of these everyday words. When we are vague and indefinite in what we mean by the words we use, then nothing is accomplished for Christ. Indeed, we may do more harm than good. Here is where instruction and experience come in. We must learn from the Master and from one another until we have a clear understanding of the words we intend to use in witnessing for Christ.

Another lesson is this. The Christian who would be an evangel and witness for Christ, today should make it his business to become interested in the various activities of people as they

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make a living. Jesus was deliberately interested in this. And just as Jesus took the materials out of this work-a-day world and turned them into tools for communicating the gospel, so must it be with us today. An illustration out of the thick context where people make their living is bound to strike home. There is too much hit-and-miss evangelism today. People sometimes think of Jesus as one who was withdrawn from the busy traffic of the world where people make their living. As we have had occasion to see, nothing could be further from the truth.

The fourth lesson for Christians today comes out of Jesus' method of winning the Samaritan woman. He took the life-situation in which he found himself and turned it into a glorious occasion. Every Christian lives each day in life-situations. If one waits for some special occasion for becoming an evangel, a witness for Christ, he will never get anywhere. We need to be alert to the opportunities about us and use them to tell the good news about Jesus Christ, to invite people to Sunday school and church, to encourage them to think about spiritual things and to participate in the life of prayer and service. And when we do this, we should follow the example of Jesus by beginning as near to the heart and interest of the person as is possible. In this way, our words will not seem like bolts out of the blue but rather like the elements of a normal conversation in the regular processes of life. To be sure, there are times when a certain bluntness is called for. But, in the main, the approach of Jesus to the Samaritan woman is a model for modern evangelism.

While Jesus began with the request for a drink, which was close to her task of the moment, he deliberately went on to deal in the inner spiritual condition of the Samaritan woman. Many people engage in genial conversations and imagine that this is evangelism. It is a part of it. But there is no Christian evan-

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gelism which does not move from genial exchanges to the inner struggles and aspirations of the human soul.

Jesus also led this woman to the answer which is found in the life-giving faith-relationship with the Father. All Christian evangelism aims toward leading people into the faith-relationship with God through Christ in which sin is forgiven, ineffectiveness is conquered, and death is defeated. And, of course, this relationship is never possible on a continuing basis without effective participation as a member of a living congregation. Jesus lingered long enough in Samaria to see to it that this woman would not be alone among those who believed.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is simplicity?
2. How did the Master use everyday experiences to interpret spiritual things?
3. How was this illustrated in the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman?
4. In what ways can we do the same thing today?

Some Suggested Conclusions

1. Simplicity is not simple-mindedness: it is the art of taking profound truths and making them plain.
2. Words from daily life have great power when used in the right way.
3. Common experiences from daily life—such as those having to do with our work—are primary tools for witnessing.
4. Like Jesus, in relation to the Samaritan woman, we shall do well to work with people in and through their unique life-situation.

CHAPTER III

JESUS ASKED KEY QUESTIONS

1. His Purpose in Asking Questions

When we ask a question it is either to receive assistance or to evoke a response. Many a time we ask because we desire information. If we stop to inquire about the best road to take to the next city, it is because we do not know the answer. If we ask an expert to tell us ways of improving our methods of farming or of running a business, it is because we want information. Occasionally, Jesus asked this type of question. He once asked the father of an epileptic boy how long the lad had been afflicted (Mk. 9:21; cf. Lk. 8:30). When a woman touched him and received healing power, he asked, "Who was it that touched me?" (Lk. 8:45)

But a good teacher may also ask a question because he wishes to awaken a response in his students. He wants them to start thinking about a matter. In other words, instead of merely handing out the answers—which he might do—he wants his students to share in the great cooperative venture of discovering the answers for themselves. Then the good teacher goes on to furnish enough guidance to help his students in this process of development. On occasion, this is what Jesus, the Great Teacher, did. He asked key questions in order to make people think soundly about God. He asked in order to show them that they were already in possession of the answers if they would only be honest. He also asked so that they might enter personally into the kingdom of God.

It is important to remember that Jesus did not ask questions primarily to lead them to new information or to new intellectual

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discoveries. To be sure, this was a part of his purpose since he knew full well that lack of proper understanding of God and his kingdom is fatal to the spiritual life. He was familiar with the words of the prophet who said,

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;
because you have rejected knowledge,
I reject you from being a priest to me.”
(Hosea 4:6)

The Master's one great objective, however, was to bring people into the kingdom of God. This becomes clear when we observe his purpose in relation to that of Socrates.

2. Socrates and Jesus

Socrates (469-399 B.C.) was a great teacher. He too asked questions in order to make people think. He was a kind of gadfly who made people uncomfortable by asking them to define their terms. He showed them up for the inconsistencies of their thinking. But his primary aim was different from that of Jesus. Here we have two great teachers using the same method but for largely different purposes.

Socrates asked questions in order to set peoples' thinking straight so they could live a good moral life. Jesus asked questions so they might let God have his way in their lives and thus become participating members in the kingdom of God. Socrates believed that if men would think straight by their own unaided reason they would live right. Voltaire (1694-1778) expressed this idea on its negative side when he said, “As long as people continue to believe absurdities they will continue to commit atrocities.” There is a truth here that must forever be remembered.

But Jesus believed that men would live right only if they

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understood the revealed purpose of God and surrendered themselves to God in faith. With Socrates the great difficulty in man was his ignorance. With Jesus it was man's willful separation from God. Socrates thought man could be good without God's help if only he were properly informed. Jesus knew that man would never be right until he understood God's purpose and surrendered himself to God's will and grace.

So Socrates asked questions in order to overcome ignorance while Jesus asked them in order to reveal and establish the kingdom of God. Jesus knew that a right understanding was essential to the service of God. But he knew that this right understanding did not come from human wisdom but from the revealed purpose of God. This is why he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and prayed, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will" (Lk. 10:21; see also Matt. 11:25-27).

Jesus knew, in a way that Socrates never realized, that the deeper difficulty in human existence lay in man's willful refusal to become an obedient member of God's kingdom. So he directed questions to people for the purpose of awakening them to the realities of God.

3. Jesus' Use of Questions and Answers

Now we need to see more specifically how Jesus used the question-and-answer method in carrying forward his great mission. We may observe four important uses Jesus made of this method. He used it (1) to get attention and to fix attention, (2) to combat error, (3) to interpret the will of God and (4) to lead people into repentance and faith. Of course these were often combined by the Master, but let us look at them in that order.

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First, Jesus asked questions and sought answers in order to get the attention of his hearers and to fix it upon what he had in mind. This is seen in his way of leading up to a parable by asking, "What do you think?" (Matt. 18:12; 21:28)

This is seen again in his deliberate policy of introducing a parable with a key question. "Can a blind man lead a blind man?" (Lk. 6:39) "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like?" (Lk. 7:31) "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight. . . ?" (Lk. 11:5-7) "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?" (Lk. 12:6) "What man of you, having a sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it?" (Lk. 15:3-4) "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin. . . ?" (Lk. 15:8) "Will any one of you, who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down at table'?" (Lk. 17:7)

Jesus also caught the attention of his hearers by putting his teachings in the form of questions. "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" (Lk. 6:41) "And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his span of life?" (Lk. 12:25) "But if God so clothes the grass . . . how much more will he clothe you. . . ?" (Lk. 12:28) "Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?" (Lk. 14:34) "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" (Lk. 14:28, see also 31.)

When Jesus referred to the Scriptures he did not always declare what they uttered. He often began with a question because he wanted to capture the serious attention of his hearers. "Have you never read in the scriptures. . . ?" (Matt. 21:42) "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry. . . ?" (Lk.

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6:3) "What is written in the law? How do you read?" (Lk. 10:26) "What then is this that is written. . . ?" (Lk. 20:17)

Jesus used the question-and-answer method to combat error. When the Pharisees thought he was speaking blasphemies in pronouncing a man forgiven, Jesus countered with questions (Lk. 5:20-23). When they charged his disciples with not fasting, he asked a question (Lk. 5:33-34). When they thought he was breaking the Sabbath, he began his replies with questions (Lk. 6:3, 9; 13:15; 14:3-5). When Simon, the Pharisee, was disturbed because Jesus accepted the gracious act of a sinful woman, Jesus injected into his comments a key question (Lk. 7:42). When certain ones said that Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebub, Jesus asked, "And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?" (Lk. 11:18) When he was chided for not washing his hands before dinner, he said, "You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?" (Lk. 11:40) When it was suggested that those who suffer most are the worst sinners, Jesus answered by asking key questions (Lk. 13:1-4). When the chief priests and scribes and elders came to him and asked by what authority he did what he did, Jesus countered with a question which they would not answer (Lk. 20:3-4). When some spies from the religious leaders brought up the tricky question about paying tribute to Caesar, Jesus asked whose likeness and inscription was on the coin (Lk. 20:24), and he moved from there to his decisive answer.

Jesus knew that there were occasions when errors had to be answered and bad influences counteracted. In the light of his own actions, it is not a characteristic of the sons of God that they sit around and let the world's errors go unanswered. Nor is it a mark of the Christian evangel to ignore the bad influences which stand in the way of those who would draw near to God. But it is particularly interesting that Jesus did not enter into long debates on these matters. He simply faced people with

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crucial questions which enabled him to set up the required answers.

Just as a football team or a basketball team works its plays to set up the goal, so Jesus used questions to prepare the way for his decisive and sometimes devastating one-sentence answers.

3. Again, Jesus asked questions in order to interpret the will of God. Nothing was more important for him than the divine determination to establish the kingdom. And he used every effort to help people to understand its nature. Many of his questions prepared the way for the Master's clear teachings on this revealed purpose of God. To this end he asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed. . ." (Lk. 13:18-19). Again he asked, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened" (Lk. 13:20-21). He once said, "You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?" (Lk. 12:56.)

When Jesus was talking to his disciples about the kingdom he broke into his remarks with the question, "Have you understood all this?" (Matt. 13:51) They said "Yes." The Master was concerned to communicate the truth about the kingdom, and he used the question-and-answer method in the process of doing so.

He wanted his followers to know that in the kingdom of God love is the law of life. So he asked a series of crucial questions, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again" (Lk. 6:32-34).

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Jesus was particularly eager for his hearers to identify himself as one through whom this kingdom was being realized. To be sure, there were times when he knew that they were not in a position to understand. But there were other occasions when he made it a point to disclose to them the will of God with reference to his own unique mission. He asked, "Who do the people say that I am?" The disciples answered, "John the Baptist; but others say, 'Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen.'" Then Jesus asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God." In this passage (Lk. 9:18-20), Jesus used the question-and-answer method in attempting to get across the profoundest truth about his own person and mission in the world. "For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as the one who serves" (Lk. 22:27).

Jesus asked some religious leaders, "How can they say that the Christ is David's son?" (Lk. 20:41) Then he so interpreted the Scriptures as to lead them to see that the Christ is not to be so literally associated with David.

The Risen Lord, on the road to Emmaus, proceeded to expound to two followers the truth about himself as the Son of God. And here again he used the question-and-answer method. He broke into their conversations by asking, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" (Lk. 24:17) When they referred to the things that had happened recently in Jerusalem—the arrest and crucifixion—he asked, "What things?" Then, at the right time, he asked them, "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Lk. 24:26) And from this point "he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Lk. 24:27).

But the Master was not content for people merely to under-

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stand the will of God with reference to the kingdom. He wanted them to respond to the call of God. He wanted them to become participating members of the kingdom. Here again we find him asking questions in order to lead up to a decisive response. "Why do you call me Lord, Lord; and not do what I tell you?" (Lk. 6:46) "Where is your faith?" (Lk. 8:25) "For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" (Lk. 9:25) "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you?" (Lk. 9:41) "And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades? (Lk. 10:15). "Who then is the faithful and wise steward. . . ?" (Lk. 12:42) "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth?" (Lk. 12:51) "Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:4-5). "Judas, would you betray the Son of man with a kiss?" (Lk. 22:48) "Do you love me?" (John 21:15-17) All of these questions are designed for the specific purpose of awakening the response of obedience and faith.

In them the mighty passion of the Master to bring people into the kingdom becomes strikingly evident.

4. Some Lessons for the Church Today

Nothing in human language is more intimately personal than a sincere question. A man may *talk* to another without noticing whether the other person is interested or not. But no one can ask a sincere question without looking for a response. Here real communication begins. A question shows a profound interest in the other person. It discloses a concern for the feelings and decisions of the other party to the conversation. So in the questions of Jesus we get a glimpse of his compassion for people,

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his desire to evoke a response, his interest in something really happening within their souls.

If Jesus used the question-and-answer method, it is bound to be good for us to do so. To that end, therefore, we need to study his ways of doing it and strive to imitate him. He is our Master Teacher in these things.

People are much more apt to listen to us if we approach them with carefully planned, sincere, interesting questions than if we bombard them with a series of statements. Does God seem real to you? If not, do you have some explanation for this? Is prayer real? Do you get to go to church much? How about the Bible? Does it have an important place in your life? Would you like to serve and please God? Do you know of others whom you might approach concerning their spiritual life? What do you think about Jesus Christ? Can you put yourself in his hands? Do you know the experience of forgiveness?

Such questions have to do with the souls of people in their dynamic relationships with God. There are other questions which are aimed primarily to instruct. As we have seen, Jesus asked such questions also. Every Sunday school teacher would do well to learn from the Master at this point. But regardless of the immediate purpose of the questions, the final aim of them all is to draw people into the orbit of God's great kingdom through Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the useful functions of a question?
2. How did Socrates and Jesus differ from each other as questioners?
3. For what specific purposes did Jesus ask questions? Name some incidents that illustrate each.
4. What place is there, if any, for carefully worded questions for drawing others into the kingdom?

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SOME SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS

1. A sincere question shows a great respect and concern for the other person.
2. Jesus made his questions do a very important work for him.
3. Questions can combat error and open the way to understanding and commitment.
4. In the Christian's effort to witness, the final aim of all questions is to enable people to respond to God's call to repentance, faith and obedience.

CHAPTER IV

JESUS WENT STRAIGHT TO THE POINT

Precious time and energy can be wasted by beating about the bush. John Heywood, writing in the sixteenth century, put it like this :

“And while I at length debate and beat the bush,
There shall step in other men and catch the birds.”

Of all people in the world, the Christian witness, whom we shall call the evangel, can least afford to lose sight of his objective. Many forces compete for the souls of men. And when thought and conversation float like clouds across the sky, ever changing shape, and going nowhere in particular, no assured results are possible. The answer is not to be found in a fanatical and restless impression of movement. Santayana has said that a fanatic is one who, having lost sight of his objective, redoubles his effort. We want none of that.

But the need of the world calls for evangelists (witness bearers for Christ) who, like Jesus before them, are determined to go to the main point. To be sure, people need to be cultivated, friendships need to be formed, experiences shared. But in a way that is surprising to those who lack experience in the practice of drawing men to God, people are often already deeply prepared to learn about spiritual realities. Jesus knew this. Often in his dealings with people he went straight to the point.

1. Jesus and Nicodemus

For example, when Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, the Master did not waste any words. He went straight to the point.

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Picture the scene (Jn. 3:1-15). Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, was deeply moved by the teachings of Jesus at the temple. He felt the force of his words; he observed the power of his deeds; and he was moved by the inspiration of his presence.

Perhaps Nicodemus went home after a busy day of activities with the thought of Jesus upon his mind. As he walked to and fro upon the roof of his house he was talking to himself. "How could he do those mighty deeds?" "There's something inspired about his teachings." "What is it that makes this Jesus so different?" These and other thoughts were cruising about in his mind. Back and forth he walked. Some things Jesus had taught pierced his soul to the quick. He was restless. A man is never more fascinating than when he has seen a vision of his deepest needs. All the artificialities are stripped away, and he stands naked in the presence of God. Nicodemus wanted to know who this Jesus really was; but more than that, he wanted to find himself. His whole being came to the point of decision. "I'll do it," he said. "I'll go to see this man." But he had his prestige to think of. His colleagues among the Pharisees would not understand. So he went by night.

As he wound his way stealthily through the dark streets of Jerusalem he thought about what he would say when he first met Jesus. He had a little speech worked out, for Nicodemus was not a man to go into any situation unprepared. He found the place where the Master was. When he saw him, he made his prepared statement: "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him."

It is fascinating to notice what Jesus said to him. As if to ignore Nicodemus' little speech entirely, he said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus went straight to the point. He aimed his words to the heart of the human situation. How so? What did

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this have to do with Nicodemus? He was a good man, a religious leader known for his sincerity. What did the new birth have to do with him?

It is significant that Jesus began his remarks to Nicodemus with these words about the New Birth. Many people obviously need to be converted. This is their only hope. But what about the Nicodemuses? They are educated, refined, sophisticated, and in a true sense religious. Jesus deliberately chose this situation to disclose one of his profoundest teachings, namely, that everyone needs to be re-created by the grace of God. Nicodemus was no exception. The issue was whether or not for some people the answers to life's deepest questions might be found in culture, morality, refinement, with a tincture of religion.

Or, to put it differently, the issue had to do with whether or not anyone could fit into the kingdom of God by following man's methods of salvation instead of God's. Nicodemus had everything except one. He had prestige, recognition, graciousness, a respectable interest in religion. But he lacked one thing, namely, the vision of God's policy regarding mankind. This is to say that Nicodemus was thinking of God's kingdom in terms of the traditions of men rather than in terms of the new life which God could make available through Jesus Christ.

Consequently, Nicodemus had never entered into a life-giving personal relationship with God—which is the New Birth. His habits of mind, and his social position mingled with the common elements of his humanity to blind him to the realities of God's kingdom.

Yet he was eager to know the will of God. So Jesus said, "You must be born again." An event must take place which breaks through the pride, the guilt, the prestige, the man-made traditions, and probe the deeper recesses of the soul. Then release comes. Then God seems real. Then and only then man's role in the kingdom becomes clear.

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2. Other Instances

In many of his other dealings with people, Jesus moved directly to the major issue of their life, namely, whether or not they were participating members in the kingdom of God. To a paralytic he said, "My son, your sins are forgiven" (Mk. 2:5), thus going to the deeper difficulty of wrongness with God. He saw Levi (Matthew) at his place of business as a tax collector and said, "Follow me" (Mk. 2:14). When the woman with the flow of blood touched his garment and was healed, the Master's great interest was in her faith (Mk. 5:34). When Peter rebuked Jesus for saying that the Son of man must suffer, be rejected and killed, Jesus turned to him and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men" (Mk. 8:33). In all of these instances the Master was determined to go directly to the point—and the point was that man was made for God and nothing was as important as belonging by faith and obedience to the ongoing kingdom of God.

When Jesus was asked whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife, he answered by pointing to the original will of God in the matter (Mk. 10:2-9). When the rich young man came running to inquire about eternal life, after only a few preliminary words Jesus went directly to the requirements of God for him. He said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Mk. 10:21). Nothing is to be put above God.

When some Pharisees and Herodians wanted to trap Jesus with the question about paying tribute to Caesar, he used this as another opportunity for calling attention to the will of God. He said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mk. 12:17).

When a scribe asked about the first and most important commandment, Jesus answered him directly. The scribe then commended him for his answer. But Jesus, being interested in the

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scribe's relationship to the kingdom, said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mk. 12:34). The Master ignored the commendation of a scribe in order to fix upon the one great question: Where are you in relation to the kingdom of God? Not in it, but near it. The widow's gift of two copper coins was seen not with reference to its worth in terms of this world, but with reference to where it placed her in the kingdom of God (Mk. 12:41-44).

In some respects there is no more beautiful incident recorded in the Gospels than the one about the man born blind whom Jesus healed (Jn. 9). The Jews did not believe that he was born blind and had been healed. They questioned his parents; they cross-examined him. They put him out of the synagogue. Then they came to him again and tried to get him to repudiate Jesus. He refused. They cast him out. Then Jesus heard about this and went out of his way to find him (Jn. 9:35). When he found him, he asked the direct question: "Do you believe in the Son of man?" The divine policy was to bring salvation through Christ and not through the synagogue. Hence, that question.

3. The Directness of Jesus' Sayings

Not only in his personal dealings but also in many of his well-known sayings Jesus went straight to the point. The point with Jesus always was to call people to become participating members of the kingdom of God. "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 6:1). "And in praying do not heap up empty phrases. . ." (Matt. 6:7). "You cannot serve God and Mammon" (material possessions) (Matt. 6:24). "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matt. 6:33). "Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls

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before swine. . .” (Matt. 7:6). “Judge not, and you will not be judged; . . . forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. . .” (Lk. 6:37-38). “. . . to every one who has will more be given; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away” (Lk. 19:26). “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40-KJV).

These sayings could be multiplied. But they are sufficient to illustrate how the Master turned his words into instruments for confronting people directly with the things of God.

Jesus enjoyed his life in this earthly setting. He breathed its air, ate its foods, drank from its wells, walked upon its pathways, sailed on its waters, slept on its pallets, and knelt upon its solid crust. He did not want anyone to miss its beauty because of blindness; nor did he want anyone to be hampered by physical affliction from enjoying the resources of nature. But those things were not foremost in his dealings with people. The great point was to be right with God by becoming, through faith, participating members of the kingdom which God is forming.

4. Lessons for Us Today

Perhaps the most dangerous enemy of the spiritual life today is distraction. While we are thinking about many different things, we lose the kingdom. There has never been a period of history when people have been presented with so many things to allure them. Advertisements assault them from every quarter, seeking to awaken responses. We have more things to read than ever before. More gadgets take our notice than ever. And we can go more places and do more things than any previous people could do.

But in all of this going there is no arriving; in all of this distraction there is no real victory. Modern man is afflicted with

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emptiness. Why? Because God is left out. For this reason the Christian evangel must learn to keep his mind on God's business, as Jesus did. The leaders in the Church, both ministers and laymen, must fix upon what is most important, namely, the kingdom of God. And by prayer and preparation they must keep this ever before them as they carry forward the work of the Church.

In this distracted world, the Christian evangelist today must enable others to keep their minds and hearts fixed on the things of God. This is what Jesus did. In personal interviews, the main thing concerns whether or not God's claims are being recognized. This must not be lost sight of because of the lure to carry on a pleasant conversation. Jesus came to the point. He kept in mind God's concern. He made people aware of that concern.

There is no possibility of winning people to Christ unless, through prayer and preparation, we are determined to help them confront the main issues of life and death and destiny before God. While each person will do this in his own way, no Christian evangel has carried out his responsibilities until, like Jesus, he makes people aware of the claims of God. Husbands and wives would do well to begin this witness at home. Fathers and mothers need to remember this with their children. Many occasions should be turned as far as possible into instruments for specifically glorifying God. This is what Jesus did.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is distraction?
2. What was the main point, according to Jesus?
3. How did he go straight to the point?
4. What methods or habits can help us to keep our minds on the main thing as we try to witness?

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SOME SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS

1. No one keeps his mind on the main objective without practice, prayer, and disciplined living.
2. The main thing is for everyone to become a participating and growing member of God's kingdom.
3. Unless the heart is right with God at its center, nothing of consequence has happened.
4. Distraction, or diversity of interest and thoughts, is a major obstacle to effective personal evangelism.

CHAPTER V

JESUS CONFRONTED PEOPLE WITH RESPONSIBILITY, LOSTNESS, AND JUDGMENT

In some respects, the most unfortunate outcome of the modern effort to understand the Bible is the loss of due emphasis upon the judgment of God. For a considerable period during the early decades of the present century, God's love was stressed without any deep awareness of his wrath and judgment. It was assumed by many that there is no hell and that souls cannot really be lost. But this was non-Biblical because it was one-sided. If there is anything which the Bible makes clear, it is that man is just the kind of being who can be saved or lost.

Jesus made it perfectly clear that God expects people to live right and that this shows that they are true members of the kingdom of God. He showed them that wrong deeds mean wrong relationships with God. And wrongness with God means disaster to the soul. So again and again he warned people that they could lose their souls.

1. Background in the Old Testament

Jesus is to be understood against the background of the Old Testament where God's judgment comes to bear upon all of man's activities. Man is responsible to God. Therefore, he is under the judgment of God for his failures. Adam and Eve (Gen. 3), Cain (Gen. 4:8-16), the wicked people of Noah's day (Gen. 6, 7), Lot's wife (Gen. 19:26), those who worshiped the golden calf (Ex. 32), the grumblers and faint-hearted in the wilderness (Num. 13-14), Eli and his sons (1 Sam. 3-4), Saul (1 Sam. 9-31), David (2 Sam. 12:10-11), Ahab and Jezebel

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(1 Kings 16-22), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:28-32), and Belshazzar (Dan. 5:22-31) these and many others tell the recurring story of the judgment of God upon people for their responsible deeds. And there is no tendency to suppose that unrepentant sinners will be gathered up into the kingdom of God.

This was a major theme of the prophets who declared that Israel stood condemned before God because of disobedience (Isa. 31:1; 33:12-14; 48:18-19, 22) Jeremiah said the same thing of the people of Judah (15:1-2). The children suffered from the sins of the fathers (Jer. 16:11-12) and all of them were together under the divine condemnation (16:13-18).

The wicked nations of the world, such as Babylon, were not exempt from this divine judgment (Isa. 34:1-2; Jer. 50:15, 31; 51:24-26; Hab. 1:5-11; 3:3-6). In the Old Testament, then, while God revealed himself as the God of mercy to all who repented, he also manifested himself as the God of wrath and judgment to all who proudly went their own ways. He requires of man that he walk uprightly (Micah 6:8).

2. Jesus Warned People of the Judgment

The New Testament carries forward this same theme (Lk. 1:51-52). Jesus warned people that they could fall to pieces before the judgment of God (Matt. 7:24-27). Souls can be lost. God will not overlook the wickedness of those who lead others astray (Lk. 17:1-2). The irresponsible rich man was portrayed by Jesus as ending up in hell, while Lazarus, the beggar, was carried by the angels to be with Abraham (Lk. 16:19-31). Jesus said that those who would normally be expected to inherit the kingdom would be shut out because they were no longer worthy of being the seed of Abraham (Matt. 8:11-12). Unless people have a higher level of righteousness than that of the scribes and Pharisees, they will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20). Jesus drove from the temple those who commercialized

sacred things. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you make it a den of robbers" (Matt. 21:12-13).

Whoever exalts himself shall be brought down (Matt. 23:12; Lk. 20:25-27). The hypocrites shall be shown for what they are (Matt. 23:27-28). Those who devour widows' houses and take advantage of them stand condemned (Matt. 23:14). Those who neglect the weightier matters of the law such as justice, mercy and faith will likewise be condemned even though they make an outward show of religiosity (Matt. 23:23). With climactic finality the Master hurled the full force of his warning power against his proud listeners when he said, "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?" (Matt. 23:33). He did not hesitate to say to a Jerusalem that was once the proud seat of David, "Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate" (Matt. 23:38). Jesus knew that souls can be lost.

The parable of the ten virgins, five of whom were wise and five foolish, further illustrates how keenly the Master felt the reality and finality of the divine judgment (Matt. 25:1-13). For some, the gates of the kingdom will be shut by their own misdeeds; for others they will be opened. This was no merely incidental teaching in Jesus' ministry. With terrific force he brought it home to people, saying, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell" (Matt. 5:29). Though not to be taken literally—for the right eye could offend no more than the left—these words disclose the radical seriousness with which Jesus spoke of man's accountability. The issues of heaven and hell are involved here. The tree that "does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt. 7:19). And those who do not do the will

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of God will hear the awful words, "Depart from me, you evil-doers" (Matt. 7:23).

3. Jesus and Those Who Would Cast Stones

The Master used strong words concerning responsibility and judgment. But these were always uttered to break through the hard crust of human pride so that people could enter the kingdom before it was too late. His words about the judgment of God came out of his concern for the people.

For example, while Jesus was teaching at the temple a great crowd was gathered to hear him. The scribes and Pharisees, without any human consideration, brought a woman who was caught in adultery and placed her in the midst of the crowd near Jesus (Jn. 8:2-11). They said, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?"

Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. They insisted on an answer. So he stood up and said, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." They went away one by one, beginning with the eldest.

Then Jesus said to the woman, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go and do not sin again."

Here the Master turned with words of judgment toward the pretenders of innocence, and with mercy toward the person who was fully aware of her sin. His one great aim was to make accusers and accused aware of the claims of God upon their souls.

4. Jesus, Judas, and Judgment

The stern realities of judgment are never seen more profoundly mingled with pathos than in Jesus' dealings with Judas Iscariot (Mk. 14:17-21). Jesus and the twelve were gathered

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together in a large upper room for the Passover meal. Jesus knew that Judas had already been talking with the chief priests about betraying him (Mk. 14:10-11). So when the group came together for this meal, the Master's heart was heavy. He said, "... one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." Then the disciples began to be sorrowful and said, "Is it I?" This question added to the pathos of the situation. For none of them could be sure that he was not the traitor. Then Jesus said, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread in the same dish with me."

Sad words! For Judas had walked with Jesus for three years. He had sat at his feet and heard his teachings at first-hand. He had seen the miracles performed and had himself been an instrument for doing great things for the kingdom (Mk. 6:7-13). With such a beginning it would seem impossible for Judas to come to such an end. But he did. Nevertheless, before he went out to do his dreadful deed, he heard Jesus say, "For the Son of man goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

When Judas left that room he was an infinite distance from the kingdom of God. He was a lost soul. He used his God-given freedom to abandon the inheritance of heaven.

Poor Judas, realizing too late that he had betrayed innocent blood, cast down his thirty pieces of silver in the temple and went out and hanged himself (Matt. 27:3-8). He forever symbolizes the fact that not even the immediate presence of the Son of God is going to *force* the will of a man into the life of obedience and faith. But defiance always means disaster.

5. Judgment Always Based Upon Love

The stern quality of judgment is always relieved by the love of God. Jesus' warnings always come out of his profound con-

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cern. He knew the sure operations of the law of consequences. The fruit is suited to the tree, and the tree is subject to the owner. People reap what they sow.

If judgment is not final on earth, there is the last judgment which all must face. Then the king will separate the sheep from the goats, and those who have lived the life of faith, obedience and love will be assigned to new positions in the heavenly kingdom (Matt. 25:31-46). For the rest, there will be the awful hell of separation from God. Jesus taught that souls will be lost. Everyone is therefore in mortal danger. Jesus made this clear in the plainest words when he said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many" (Matt. 7:13). He had those many lost souls on his heart.

It is against the background of this ultimate destiny of people that the powerful warnings of Jesus are to be seen. If a man's very life is at stake, strong measures may be required to rescue him. Jesus, sensing profoundly the awful reality of man's accountability to God, boldly faced people with the fact of judgment.

6. Lessons for the Church Today

The consciences of people have grown flabby. Even those of us who profess to be Christians are in danger of falling into a weak sentimental Christianity in which the distinctions between good and bad are blurred. As a consequence, hell has lost its meaning.

While all of us know that we are forgiven not because of our merits but because of God's grace in Christ, we must not forget that God expects his children to live right. The Ten Commandments still hold good. The works of the flesh are still evil (Gal. 5:19-21). And those who perform them "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). The fruit of the Spirit is still

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good (Gal. 5:22), and those who bear good fruit are claimed by God.

The Church needs to learn again from Jesus Christ that there are lost souls. Everyone is in constant danger of being lost. A small boat on a storm-tossed sea is a true picture of everyone's situation. Therefore, the urgency of Jesus must become ours. The passion for souls must be awakened against the background of man's lostness.

This Christian concern will begin to express itself first toward those who are dearest to us. Here each must support the other in earnest prayers. Parents must be concerned about their children and children about their parents. Every human being must be seen as one who is in mortal danger of being lost but who has been elected to receive the gift of salvation through Christ Jesus.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What leads us to say that judgment is important in the Old Testament? Consider specific passages of Scripture.
2. According to Jesus, will everyone be saved? Or are there lost souls?
3. Are we as Christians obligated to warn people of the judgment of God?
4. How should this be done?

SOME SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS

1. Judgment is a basic fact in life and in the Bible.
2. Jesus taught that persons can be lost.
3. If we are saved by grace, that is, by God's gift of forgiveness, this does not mean that we are free from God's judgment based upon our deeds.
4. We begin the work of warning with ourselves and move from there to those with whom we are most intimately associated.

CHAPTER VI

JESUS USED THE MINISTRY OF HEALING

The preconceptions of the twentieth century have made it difficult for many to believe in the healing miracles of Jesus. There is not so much opposition to the miracles which seem to involve merely psychological influences upon the sick. But the miracles of restoring sight, healing lepers, raising the dead—these appear to the modern mind to be fantastic. The gospel records concerning them have been regarded by many as merely human fabrications. Many have said that the real events were simply adorned and colored by the “creative artists” who wrote the Four Gospels.

It should be remembered that, according to the gospel records, the miracles of Jesus were no less astonishing to those who witnessed them in the first century than they are to us who read about them in the twentieth. It is no sign of any great intellectual advancement on our part that we too find it difficult to believe in what many contemporaries of Jesus sought so eagerly to discount.

1. The Proper Understanding of the Miracles

The fact is that everything seems fantastic until seen in the light of its proper context. A baseball glove seems ridiculous to one who knows nothing of the game. What good is just one glove? Why all those huge fingers in it? Why the heavy padding in the wrong places? What about the silly openness at the back?

If you try to understand the baseball glove in the context of gloves that keep our hands warm, there is nothing but mystery. This is the wrong context. But explain the game which

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the glove exists to serve, and everything becomes clear. What at first seemed ridiculous and fantastic takes on all the proportions of fitness.

This simple illustration may serve a great purpose here. Many people do not understand Jesus Christ because they think of him in the ordinary contexts of our common life. It is true that he was a man. It is also true that he dwelt in our midst and participated in our affairs. But to understand him as merely a man is to misunderstand him. If we read the records of his miracles in the light of the ordinary activities of our friends and acquaintances, we read them in an utterly inadequate context.

What we require, then, is to see Jesus in the light of the total revealed purpose of God in creation, redemption, and consummation. God had a plan in creating the universe and man. That plan was to realize moral and spiritual values under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. But man, being created free, chose to sin. So God, in his infinite love, took the initiative to provide for man's salvation through Jesus Christ, his Son. Since the end of this present world must be in keeping with its beginning, God has determined to form new heavens and a new earth under the visible authority of Jesus Christ. Only the purity, courage and love of the Son of God could be given the final authority and glory.

The miracles of Jesus are to be seen in this total context of God's revealed purpose. Then, far from being fantastic, they take on all the proportions of fitness. For in Jesus Christ God's great purpose was being expressed. Thus the Master used the vast resources at hand to draw people through the ministry of healing and restoration into the kingdom which God has determined to establish from the foundation of the world. Understand the revealed purpose of God, and you will understand Jesus and the miracles. We believe in the miracles because we

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see them as a part of the revealed determination of God in Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus Reached People Through Their Illness and Tragedy

Jesus did not believe that the Father wanted anyone to shed a needless tear or to suffer through a pointless tragedy. But he knew that there were circumstances in the lives of people in which they were particularly open to the divine love. People tend to be self-satisfied when all goes well with them. But when they are sick and handicapped they realize—what everyone should know all along—that they are utterly dependent upon God.

The Master did not exploit illness and tragedy; he simply used these profound factors in our human situation just as he used every other opportunity to draw people into the kingdom. The fact is that most of the time the sick were either brought to him or he was invited to go to them. Life being as it is, and sickness and tragedy being with us as they are, the Master simply used these intimately personal experiences to carry forward his mission of inaugurating the kingdom.

It was no accident, then, that at the very start of his ministry Jesus healed the sick (Mk. 1:23-27, 30-31, 32-34). He knew that he had special access to the hearts of the sick and handicapped. He was fully aware of his God-appointed power to heal. He saw where the most pressing needs were and he sought to meet them. He himself said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. . ." (Mk. 2:17).

3. The Paralytic Carried by Four Men

After Jesus had healed many people in Capernaum he made a journey through other towns, preaching and healing (Mk. 1:38-39). When he returned to Capernaum, the news of his

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arrival spread everywhere in the community; and a great crowd gathered about the house where Jesus was staying. While he was preaching to them, four men brought a paralytic to be healed. But not being able to bring him through the crowd, they climbed onto the roof, made an opening in it, and let the paralytic man down to where Jesus was. "And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'My son, your sins are forgiven' "(Mk. 2:5).

Jesus was concerned to heal the man. But, first and foremost, he wanted the man to be right with God. He dealt first with the sickness of the human heart, namely, sin, and then he went on to say to the man, ". . . rise, take up your pallet and go home" (Mk. 2:11). And he rose and took up his pallet and went out before the astonished crowd.

No words can exaggerate the determination of Jesus to use every occasion for reminding people of the kingdom of God. To be sure, he healed them because he wanted to restore them to normal life. But deeper than everything was his purpose to open the way to the kingdom. The kingdom was the realm under God where love and goodness presided.

4. The Man With the Withered Hand

There was a man with a withered hand in the synagogue, and Jesus saw him (Mk. 3:1-5). Others cared to do nothing and could do nothing, but Jesus, disclosing the will of God in regard to human need, commanded the man to come to him. Then he asked, "Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" The people were silent. Jesus, sensing their hardness of heart, looked on them with anger, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And his hand was restored.

The real meaning of this incident is that God's mighty concern for persons in need *had* to express itself through the Master.

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His healing power was not used in any vain show. It was rather the inevitable expression of the divine determination in Jesus Christ to reveal and inaugurate the kingdom of God where love, kindness, and redemptive activity are the order of the day. In other words, Jesus healed people for the same reason that he taught and preached, namely, that the loving purpose of God might be realized in the hearts of men.

Toward all areas of human need the Master's energy flowed, whether toward spiritual ignorance, toward stubborn blindness, toward sickness, or toward plain indifference.

5. Other Instances

So whatever the incident, the objective was the same. The woman who touched the hem of his garment felt the surging power of the kingdom at work within her own body as she was restored to health (Mk. 5:25-34). The raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk. 5:35-43), the healing of many people in the market places (Mk. 6:56), the restoring of the Greek woman's daughter in the region of Tyre and Sidon (Mk. 7:24-30), the ministry to the deaf man in the region of the Decapolis (Mk. 7:32-35) and to the blind man at Bethsaida (Mk. 8:22-26), and the cure of the epileptic boy (Mk. 9:14-29)—all of these were simply instruments for enabling those who were restored and those who saw, to become aware that the kingdom of God was at hand. The time for repentance and faith had arrived.

6. Lessons for the Church Today

Every Christian evangel must be aware, with Jesus, of the depth of meaning with which people feel their sickness and their handicaps. And while there must be no sense of condescending pity, there must be the profound awareness that everyone is potentially nearer the kingdom of God when he suffers certain

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privations than when all is going well. Jesus knew that God would work mightily through such experiences to reveal the things of God. Christians today must be mindful of the same great truth.

The evangel may spend a lot of needless time working with people who are not ready to hear the word of God. There are hard-hearted people whose pride and blindness pose, for the time being, as insuperable barriers to any effective witness. There is no need to give up hope regarding them. But neither is there good reason to waste precious hours upon them when it is perfectly clear that they have no intention of either obeying the will of God or of receiving his offer of salvation. Jesus said, "Do not give dogs what is holy. . ." (Matt. 7:6). He instructed his disciples not to linger with those who refused to listen, and he told them to shake off the dust from their feet when they left the houses of such folk (Matt. 10:14).

There is only so much time to work and only a limited supply of energy. Therefore, the heaviest concentration of attention must be upon those who, through the diverse experiences of life, show some readiness to abandon their pride and to forsake their idols for the service of Christ.

Another lesson is this. We cannot heal as the Master did. But we can use the vast resources of medical science as an extension of his healing arm and thus become instruments for healing and restoration. This in turn not only means health and normalcy; it means also the boundless opportunity for making real in the hearts of men the good news of the kingdom.

The deeper meanings of life are often seen during periods of sickness and privation. Anyone who, during such periods, misses the closer walk with Christ has lost one of life's greatest opportunities. The darkest hours may be the ones through which the divine light shines clearest. And the bitterest moments may be life's sweetest—if Christ is present.

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why is it hard for some people today to believe in the miracles of Jesus?
2. How is our thinking set straight here?
3. Why is it that people are usually more open to spiritual truth when they begin to lose their health?
4. How can we use sickness, suffering, and privation as occasions for Christian service and witness?

SOME SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS

1. Just as Jesus used his miracles for drawing people into the kingdom, we too, should use these modern miracles of medical treatment to restore the souls of men.
2. The belief in God's supernatural work, when rightly illuminated by the Bible, is essential to the most effective Christian witness.
3. Jesus took great pains to minister to the sick. He went to trouble in behalf of those in need.
4. The heart that feels the need for God is receptive to the evangel.

CHAPTER VII

JESUS ASSOCIATED INTIMATELY WITH ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE

One of the most amazing things about Jesus was his eagerness to involve himself in familiar associations with all kinds of people. There was none of that haughtiness or snobbery that so frequently goes with persons of even modest attainments. He loved people too much to withhold himself from them in the elemental circumstances of their daily life.

Except for the times when Jesus went apart to pray, he was always in the main currents of human activity. He was so devoted to people that if he had held himself aloof, or perched himself on some pinnacle, he would have been entirely out of character. The one sentence which seems to gather up all that we have in mind here is this: He involved himself fully in man's common life.

1. Jesus, the Friend of Sinners and Outcasts

There are two passages in the Gospel of Matthew which, though brief, speak volumes. The first pictures the scene where Jesus sat at a dinner table in a house and many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples (Matt. 9:10-13; see also Lk. 5:24-30; 15:1-2). When the Pharisees saw this, they lifted their eyebrows and asked the disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

The second passage is similar to the first. Jesus, referring to his activities for which he was criticized, said: "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places and calling to their playmates,

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'We piped to you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' " (Matt. 11:16-19)

In order to get the picture clearly in mind, we must realize who the tax collectors were. During the times of Jesus, the whole of Palestine was under the dominion of Rome. Rome exacted of all of her colonies a certain amount of tribute. Many Jews were hired to collect this tax money. As we know, no one particularly enjoys paying taxes even to his own government. But to pay taxes to those far-away rulers who have conquered a nation is a most painful experience. So some of the Jews who were willing to stoop to collecting the taxes from their own people in behalf of their conquerors were naturally regarded as outcasts. They had sold their souls and bodies for material gain. For this reason they were lumped together with the worst sinners.

Jesus associated with known sinners and tax collectors. But the two passages of Scripture referred to above tell the reason why he did so. It was farthest from his thought to bring himself down to their moral standards. He associated with them because he loved them and wanted to draw them into the kingdom.

As he himself said, the healthy do not need a physician (Matt. 9:12). He knew these people were spiritually sick. But he knew also that there was no chance of winning them without having personal contact with them. Jesus made it a point to get down on the level where people lived. For it was his great mission to "seek and to save the lost" (Lk. 19:10).

2. Jesus Associated with the Poor

At times we gather from the gospel records that Jesus liked to be with the poor more than with any others. He certainly made it a special part of his life's work to minister to them (Matt. 9:36; 11:5; Lk. 7:19-23). The humble beginning of his own earthly life in the stable at Bethlehem suggests that from the start he was appointed to bring hope and salvation to the humble folk of all generations. His heart went out to the multitudes and he could not send them home hungry (Mk. 6:33-42). Moreover, it is interesting to note that he made his disciples leave him with the multitudes so that he could send them away personally (Mk. 6:45-46, see also Mk. 8:1-10).

Jesus noticed the rich people putting much money into the treasury. But he was attracted most by the poor widow who gave her penny (Mk. 12:41-42). The Master was so moved by this simple incident that he called his disciples to him and said of them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living" (Mk. 12:43-44).

There is no stronger proof that Jesus loved the poor than the fact that they wanted to be with him (Lk. 4:42-43). Even when they were hungry they preferred to remain in his presence for three days rather than to return home for food (Mk. 8:1-3).

3. Jesus and Nietzsche

Nietzsche (1844-1900), a German philosopher, has chided Christians for their interest in the weak, the poor, the needy. In one of the fiercest attacks upon Jesus and his followers, Nietzsche said that Christianity is the champion of weakness and failure in people. What is needed, he said, is to appeal to greatness and strength because real living means the will to

JESUS ASSOCIATED INTIMATELY WITH ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE power. It was no accident that Adolph Hitler gave a copy of the writings of Nietzsche to his colleague in inhumanity, Mussolini.

It can never be an argument against Jesus that he took the weak and made them strong. More than this, he disclosed the very purpose of God by showing that *every* human being is precious in God's sight.

4. Jesus Loved Children

This determination of the Master to involve himself in all phases of the common life of humanity is seen also in his love of children. Once, in order to demonstrate a teaching, he called a child and placed him in the midst of the disciples (Matt. 18: 1-6). Then Jesus told them, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." In Mark's Gospel we are told that when he had taken the child in his arms he taught them (Mk. 9:36). More significant in some respects than the teaching was the fact that the child gladly came when Jesus called him and that Jesus held him in his arms as he continued to teach. This shows that Jesus spent time with children, that they knew and loved him.

He watched children at play (Matt. 11:16-19). When they brought children to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray for them, the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:13-14). Then he laid his hands on them.

When an argument arose among the disciples as to which was the greatest, Jesus took a child and put him by his side. Then he illustrated his teaching about greatness with the example of service to little ones (Lk. 9:46-48). A most revealing fact here is that Jesus took the child and placed him beside himself.

There can be no doubt that among the deepest concerns of

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the Master was that for children. He was especially eager that no one be permitted to stand in the way of the spiritual development of these little ones (Matt. 18:5-6; Lk. 9:48).

5. Jesus Associated Intimately with the Pharisees

It is usually supposed that Pharisees were always opposing Jesus and that for this reason he had no intimate relationship with them. But the truth is that on various occasions Jesus had fellowship with them on a different basis.

For example, Jesus entered into the most profound private conversations with Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin (the governing body among the Jews) (Jn. 3:1-15). It was probably a somewhat regular practice in the life of the Master to dine with Pharisees and other religious leaders of the day. At least three such incidents are mentioned in Luke (7:36; 11:37; 14:1). This suggests that there were many more. Jesus did not withhold himself from any group of people. Nor did he show partiality. He did spend most of his time with the needy. But he recognized that all were equally in need of God's grace.

6. Jesus and Rich People

People of means figured significantly in the life of Jesus. The rich wise men came from far to worship him when he was born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1-11). Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea, claimed his body after his crucifixion (Jn. 19:38-39). From beginning to end, then, rich people entered into the activities of Jesus. Levi, the publican, was wealthy enough to have Jesus as his guest of honor at "a great feast in his house" (Lk. 5:29). Jesus stayed with Zacchaeus who was "a chief tax collector, and rich" (Lk. 19:1-9). When a rich young ruler came to him for

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help, we are told that Jesus "loved him" and did everything in his power to give spiritual guidance (Mk. 10:17-22).

Jesus knew well that it is hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God (Mk. 10:23-25). For their riches blind them to their desperate need of God: "the cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22). But Jesus was as eager to serve a rich man as a poor man if the need presented itself. For in his eyes, wealth and poverty were incidental to the fact that each human being was an immortal soul, created and chosen for participation in the kingdom of God.

7. Lessons for the Church Today

Granting a vital Christian experience, the most important single qualification for being an effective evangel is that of having a genuine concern for the spiritual state of *all kinds of people*. The person who spends time classifying people as rich-poor, male-female, old-young, learned-ignorant, refined-vulgar, white-black, yellow-brown, is disqualified for any significant role as a Christian evangel. It is not that these distinctions are to be ignored. It is rather that they are not to blur the Christian's clear vision that *all souls* are equally precious in God's sight. This is what Jesus taught.

The great problem of life here is to get down to essentials. The essential fact about *any* man is that he was made to become a redeemed and participating member of the kingdom of God. That kingdom begins here and continues into the next life. Many people are lost. Many are refusing to yield themselves to Christ and his kingdom. No greater tragedy can be mentioned than that. Better by far to be poor and in the kingdom than to be rich and outside of it. God has a way of taking *any and all* who respond in repentance and faith. The Christian evangel must be fully aware of this and spend his energies accordingly.

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If Methodism needs to recover her heritage at any one point it is just here. For Methodism started out as an effort to win the masses. Wherever the multitudes were, the Methodists went. On whatever level people lived, the Methodists entered into their life and lifted them up to Christ. This is the true spirit of the evangel of every generation. If Methodist ministers are committed to first-rate preparation in their colleges and seminaries, this is not to keep them out of touch with the masses. The better the training, the more profound the concern for each human soul. John Wesley illustrated this almost perfectly. While he could preach before the best educated people of his day, he could also share the gospel with the miners who came out of the bowels of the earth to hear his message.

A truly well-trained mind can communicate with anyone and everyone. Intellectual snobbery is not only one of the worst sins: it is one of the surest signs of profound ignorance. This is the "ignorance of the learned." There is nothing of it in Jesus; and he spent major portions of his time and energy fighting against those who had in like manner overlooked the weightier realities about the human soul.

Jesus was interested in children. Every great Christian evangel is necessarily interested in children. There are some ministers whom children love in a special way. They come to the minister, throw their arms around a leg, or take his hand, or tell him something that is on their hearts. Jesus was like that.

No church will grow much unless there is a serious interest in its work with children and young people. The Christian evangel involves himself with these younger folk and spends time with them. Moreover, he encourages them to bring others into the Christian fellowship. The best evangelists among the youth may be the young people themselves. The Master would not have his Church overlook the possibilities of winning others through younger evangelists.

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What reasons might people have for associating with "tax collectors and sinners"? Why did Jesus associate with them?
2. How has Jesus been criticized for his work with the weak and the poor?
3. What is the significance of the fact that children loved Jesus?
4. Did Jesus confine his interest to the poor and sick? If not, why not?

SOME SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS

1. To win people, we must go where they are, as Jesus did.
2. To win people, we must identify ourselves with their life and interests, as Jesus did.
3. We must take a special interest in children, as Jesus did.
4. In soul-winning, we must overlook our human distinctions of nation, class, race, and culture; for all are called to experience the joys of salvation.

CHAPTER VIII

JESUS LED PEOPLE INTO A RIGHT UNDERSTANDING

In considering Jesus' methods of evangelism we need to note in a special way his determination to impart a right understanding. This was a major feature of his effort to draw people into the kingdom. For him, to be an evangel implied the responsibility of helping others to correct and improve their thinking about God and his kingdom.

Because the Master spent so much of his effort in doing this, he has been called the Great Teacher. He was known as "Teacher" in his own day (Matt. 12:38; 19:16; 26:18; Mk. 9:38; 12:14, 19; 13:1) and his followers ever since have thought of him as both Teacher and Lord.

Jesus was concerned not only to lead people to make crucial decisions relative to the kingdom of God. He was also concerned to establish them in the kingdom. So he taught them. He began this ministry of instruction by first teaching his own disciples (Matt. 5:1-2; 11:1). Jesus knew that he did not have sufficient time with the multitudes to get across the deeper meaning of the kingdom. This is why he could say to the twelve, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables" (Mk. 4:11). In this small intimate circle, he spent a large portion of his three-year ministry trying to get across to Peter, Andrew, James, John and the rest the nature of the kingdom of God. The very word, "disciple," means "learner" and suggests its counterpart, "teacher." This is what Jesus had in mind when he said, "A disciple is not above his teacher. . ." (Matt. 10:24). He was also

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profoundly interested in teaching larger groups of people to whom he ministered.

From the start this was a characteristic feature of his mission. We read that he went about all Galilee, "teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. . ." (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 11:1; Mk. 4:1-2; Lk. 5:17; 6:6). In Mark and Luke we find the simplest and most direct statements of all: "And he went about among the villages teaching" (Mark 6:6), "And he was teaching daily in the temple" (Lk. 19:47).

1. Jesus Knew That Understanding and Commitment Go Together

No one saw more clearly than Jesus the importance of the right understanding of God and his kingdom. This is not to say that Jesus wanted people to have an involved and technical knowledge of God. He did not expect that, nor was it needed. It means, rather, that Jesus wanted people to know God as Father and Judge. He wanted them to realize that God had a plan for every life; and he wanted them to know what that plan was. He was eager for everyone to know that God was determined to realize his kingdom both here and in the world to come. He expected people to participate obediently in the kingdom as soon as they were given to know something about it.

2. The Pharisees Were Opposed for Their Blindness

A major reason for his opposition to the Pharisees and other religious leaders is seen in his constant awareness of their blind *misunderstanding* of the nature of the kingdom. Again and again, therefore, Jesus addressed himself to this problem. He told the Pharisees and Sadducees that they were wise enough to interpret the signs of the weather but that they could not "interpret the signs of the times" (Matt. 16:1-3). In other words, they were unable to comprehend the meaning of what

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was taking place before their very eyes in relation to the revealed purpose of God to establish his kingdom. Jesus said that by their blind and conceited misunderstanding of the kingdom, the scribes and Pharisees were actually shutting the door to the kingdom of heaven and preventing people from entering it (Matt. 23:13). They were not, like Joseph of Arimathea, really looking for the kingdom of God (Mk. 15:43). A primary reason for their difficulty lay in their failure to *understand* rightly. So, after stating his mission, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Go and learn what this means" (Matt. 9:13). Among other things, they needed a different level of comprehension.

3. Jesus Took Pains to Teach

This is why Jesus took such pains to instruct his followers. In teaching them, he would sometimes say, "Listen!" (Mk. 4:3), or, "Hear and understand" (Matt. 15:10), or, "Let these words sink into your ears" (Lk. 9:44). What good was it for them to hear and not understand?

When Jesus commissioned the twelve for a special task, he sent them out "to preach the kingdom of God and to heal" (Lk. 9:1-2). But in order to preach the kingdom of God they had to be instructed concerning its nature. Then, to preach effectively they had to get across its meaning to their hearers. Even the performance of mighty works does not constitute the coming of the kingdom of God (see Matt. 7:21-23).

It is not surprising, therefore, to find Jesus concluding his Sermon on the Mount with an appeal to wisdom (Matt. 7:24, 26). In the parable of the rich fool God says to the man, "Fool! This night your soul is required of you. . ." (Lk. 12:20). The Master chided the Pharisees for their foolishness (Lk. 11:40), and he listed foolishness among the evils that come from inner pollution of soul (Mk. 7:21-22).

In the light of all of this we can understand why Jesus de-

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liberately put the phrase, "and with all your mind," into his commandment to love God (Matt. 22:37). This is not in the Old Testament (see Deut. 6:5). What does it mean to love God with all one's *mind*? Surely it means to strive to understand God's revealed determination to establish his kingdom in his own way so that we might be made faithful participants with him in his great purpose?

Paul carries forward this same emphasis when he writes to the Christian laymen at Ephesus: "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17).

4. Man's Understanding of God's Kingdom

Jesus made it a special point to teach people concerning the nature of the kingdom of God (Matt. 13; 25; Mk. 4; Lk. 13; 15). This was because he was keenly sensitive to the blind determination of men to think of God's kingdom in terms of their own miserable standards and ways. Any careful study of the teachings of Jesus concerning the kingdom will reveal with shocking clarity that they cut right across the way people usually think on this subject.

People want to believe that everyone will be saved, but Jesus said that many "will seek to enter and will not be able" (Lk. 13:24). "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard . . . and those who find it are few" (Matt. 7:13-14; 22:14; 25:1-13). The sources of sin and the evil-doers will be destroyed like the tares which are thrown into the furnace of fire (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43).

People want to think that they will be rewarded according to their own measures of accomplishment. But God, in his infinite wisdom and grace, has his own way of rewarding his children; and that is by the inner determination to be at the center of his will and to accept his grace rather than by the length of time served (Matt. 20:1-16).

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People are apt to think that social prestige and privilege mean God's favor in the kingdom. The parable of the Pharisee and the publican show how wrong this is (Lk. 18:9-14). The kingdom will be taken from those who think they are fit for it and given to repentant sinners and outsiders. (Matt. 8:11-12; 21:31-43). Jesus taught that the first shall be last and the last first (Matt. 19:30; 20:16; see Mk. 12:38-40). People imagine that their apparently legitimate excuses for neglecting God's kingdom will be overlooked, but Jesus taught that *nothing* is to stand in the way of attending God's banquet—neither a recent purchase of property and cattle, nor a honeymoon, nor any other earthly interest (Lk. 14:15-24). Jesus summarized his thoughts on this when he said to the Pharisees, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God" (Lk. 16:15).

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because its people did not *know* the things of God. He said, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!" (Lk. 19:42) Then after predicting its destruction, he gave the reason for it, namely, "because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Lk. 19:44). The want of a proper understanding was fatal to the people of Jerusalem. So is it with all peoples. Therefore, Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes "he will teach you all things" (Jn. 14:26).

5. Lessons for the Church Today

Jesus knew that people do not enter the kingdom of God merely by a right understanding. For a person may believe in God and understand his revealed purpose and still not surrender his will. But Jesus knew also that no one could properly identify himself with the kingdom of God unless he had some real un-

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derstanding of God's revealed purpose. The Church today must never lose sight of this.

A person is not won to Christ who is not instructed in the faith. He may have taken the first step, experienced the first beginnings of the new life, but he needs to be established in the faith. This is partly a matter of daily growth in understanding what the will of God is (Eph. 5:17).

Moreover, a person with an essentially wrong conception of God and his kingdom can be so misguided as to lose his way. The idea that people can enter into a vital relationship with God when their minds are cluttered up with all manner of errors is a mistake. It is true that God overlooks many errors if Christ is made central. But God is not pleased with these misconceptions.

What sort of things does the seeker need to understand in order to be confirmed, rooted and grounded, in the faith?

First, he needs to *know* that in the Biblical revelation we find the only total perspective in relation to which life can be lived in a meaningful way. Man is lost in despair and emptiness partly because he has no total frame of reference in relation to which human life can have any enduring glory. Communism cannot furnish it. For in its perspective there is no mind greater than the mind of man. Even the economic structure—of which communists make so much—is at last swallowed up in a meaningless realm of blind impersonal processes. Ideals are merely the outcome of economic structures. Or, if they are good, they are nothing more than party policies. They have no rootage in God.

But in the Biblical revelation, all of man's higher aspirations have their meaning and glory in relationship to God. Man is a creature of incalculable worth because God made him to participate in His kingdom under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Second, the seeker needs to *know* that God's way of salvation is through Jesus Christ and not through any other. We have

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already had occasion to observe that the soul of man can be lost. This is the worst of all disasters. But we have also seen that the soul can be saved. This is the most wonderful experience into which the soul can enter. Jesus taught these things.

But how is the soul saved? What does this mean? The answer comes through understanding and acting upon the revelation of the kingdom of God. God has revealed his purpose in creating the universe and man to be that of establishing his kingdom under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. So, according to his plan, the soul of man is to be brought into the kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ and through the new life that is thus imparted to it.

Again, the seeker needs to *know* the absoluteness of the demands of God relative to the kingdom. There is no half-way point. Either a person is in or he is out. Everything here has to do with the deep inner response of the soul. It is a life-or-death matter. It is to be taken with utmost seriousness.

If a man is about to lose his farm or his business, he will consider with the greatest care what he must do to save it. He will gather together all of his resources, mortgage his holdings, and involve himself heavily in debt. He will take the matter with radical seriousness. So must it be with the kingdom of God.

If a once-happy home is endangered, then husband or wife or children—someone—will expend himself in a total effort to save what is most precious. So it is with the kingdom of God.

A young couple seeking to make its way in the world will sacrifice all in order to give the husband a chance to go through the rigorous disciplines of preparation. So must it be with the kingdom of God.

Finally, the seeker needs to *know* that God's way of enabling his children to live the Christian life is by the power of the Holy Spirit. No one can do it in his own strength alone. Before the temptations, perplexities, doubts, fears, antagonisms, tragedies

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of this world, man cannot live victoriously without the help of God. So God in his infinite wisdom and love has made his resources available to his children through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit becomes a sustaining force in and through the community of believers. He blesses and inspires people through affirmation, Scripture reading, preaching, singing, prayer, and sacrament. He thus prepares the soul for victorious living through public worship, private devotions, and cooperative deeds of love and mercy. The Spirit ever reminds us of the call to good sense in all matters. For the Christian at his best is always characterized by a judicious mind. As Paul said, "Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature" (1 Cor. 14:20).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why did Jesus teach?
2. Why did he oppose the Pharisees?
3. What did Jesus most want people to understand?
4. What must we know to be rooted and grounded in the faith?

SOME SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS

1. A right understanding of God's revealed purpose is essential to salvation.
2. Just as errors separated the Pharisees from God and his kingdom, so do misconceptions today keep us from entering into the kingdom.
3. We need to understand that God is, that he is good, and that he created the universe and man for a great purpose of which we are a part. We need to understand that God is determined to save people through Jesus Christ. We need to know that God's way of sustaining people in adventurous Christian living is by the power of the Holy Spirit within the community of faith.
4. We need to teach these things, as Jesus did.

CHAPTER IX

JESUS ENLISTED OTHERS IN PLANNED EVANGELISM

It is commonly supposed that Jesus carried forward his work by free spontaneity without deliberate plan and program. This is a complete misunderstanding of the realities. It is true that frequently Jesus found himself in situations which called for immediate responses to human need. But he thought deeply about the ways of reaching others and he deliberately planned his work to that end.

The Master had his own unique mission to perform as Savior of the world. No one else could do this for him. Nor could he call upon others to take upon themselves even a small portion of the work which he alone could perform as Redeemer. But in the winning of others Jesus enlisted the assistance of those who were willing to share with him in the task.

1. The Twelve Were Chosen to Be Evangels

The selection of the twelve disciples shows that Jesus was profoundly interested in organizing his followers into a continuing movement. This is why he prayed all night before choosing the twelve and naming them apostles (Lk. 6:12-13). This was a decision of the utmost consequence because so much was to depend upon the character and quality of their leadership. Jesus did not intend to spread the gospel without the assistance of others. Another way of putting it is this: Through Jesus Christ, God has determined to bring people into the kingdom by means of the cooperative efforts of a community of believers. Not even the Son of God could do this alone. For it is the re-

vealed policy of God to win people through those who accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

One of the main reasons, therefore, for choosing the twelve was to enlist their assistance for proclaiming the good news. They were not selected merely to sit at the feet of Jesus or follow him about. They had specific assignments. So we read in Mark's Gospel: "And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. . ." (3:14-15). Clearly, these disciples were chosen for the purpose of reaching "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6).

2. The Master's Planned Program

With a definite plan in mind he sent the twelve disciples out to preach and heal (Matt. 10:1; Lk. 9:1). This was also done with a much larger body, namely, the seventy whom Jesus appointed to become evangelists (Lk. 10:1).

That the references in the Gospels to these events indicate a definite strategy of evangelism is evident from three considerations. First, Jesus spent much time and care in preparing the twelve for the missions on which they were sent (Matt. 10:5-42). He told them where to go and where not to go (10:5-6). He instructed them concerning what to preach. For he said, "And preach as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (10:7). He gave them guidance concerning what they should do. He endowed them with extraordinary powers by which to carry out his purpose (10:8). He told them to give their services without pay (10:8). They were to take no money in their purses (10:9), no baggage, no extra clothes, not even a staff (10:10). They were to rely on the generosity of those who gratefully received the benefits of their services, "for the laborer deserves his food" (10:10; see also Lk. 10:7).

Jesus instructed them to "find out" whether people were

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friendly or hostile, and they were to linger with those who were appreciative (Matt. 10:11-13). If anyone refused to listen, they were to shake off the dust from their feet as they departed (10:14). They were to expect opposition, for they were going out "as sheep in the midst of wolves" (10:16). In such a situation they were to "be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (10:16). They were to go out prepared for the worst. Jesus said, "Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake. . ." (10:17-18). They were to be afraid of nothing (10:26). The hairs on their heads were all numbered (10:30).

Then Jesus gave his disciples a great promise. He promised fruits for their labors. He assured them of the salvation of those who would respond faithfully to their words and deeds (10:32, 40-42). After giving these detailed instructions, Jesus himself "went on from there to teach and preach in their cities" (11:1).

This last reference suggests a second clear indication that Jesus had a planned program of evangelism. It is not to be supposed that without any pattern he simply went from village to village. In Luke there is a reference which gathers up many events in the life of Jesus and compresses them into a single sentence. "After this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come" (Lk. 10:1).

A definite pattern of activity is set by the Master. The seventy (some ancient authorities read seventy-two) were to go out "two by two." This is a specific procedure. Moreover, they were to go to those towns and places where Jesus himself was about to come. While they were commissioned to carry forward the work on their own, they were also to prepare the way in each community for the visit which Jesus himself was to make.

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A third clear indication of the Master's determination to evangelize according to a plan is seen in Luke 10:17. There we are told that the seventy "returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!'" While this does not necessarily suggest a formal report of their activities to Jesus, it does show that they planned to come together after the completion of a specific mission; and it makes sense to suppose that one of the main reasons for coming together in this way was to share the reports of those who were appointed to go out "two by two."

No real difficulty is posed by the reference in Luke 22:35, where the same instructions which were given to the seventy are said to have been given to the twelve apostles. For this means simply that Jesus sent out both groups with very much the same directives. These brief references suggest that on other occasions which are not recorded in the Four Gospels at all, Jesus followed this general pattern of evangelistic activity.

3. The Call to Pray for More Workers

There are some verses in the Gospels which, though referring to a particular incident, summarize many events of the same kind. This is true of Luke 10:2 where Jesus said to the seventy, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." This was not merely a casual remark of the Master. It expressed a policy.

The reader is apt to think that on one occasion Jesus looked out upon a field ripe for harvest in a community where there were not enough people to do the work and then made this remark. But it would be far truer to think that Jesus took that common experience in the life of the farmer and used it from time to time to impress his followers with a specific course of

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action. They were to pray. They were to pray for an increased number of laborers in the kingdom.

This is another way of saying that the seventy were to take into their prayer life the whole range of the work of proclaiming the kingdom of God to the lost. The task of winning others to God weighed heavily upon the heart of the Master and he communicated his serious concern to his followers. More than this, he enlisted them in the life of prayer and work to the end that as many as would might enter into the kingdom of God.

4. Lessons for the Church Today

Several lessons for the Church today may be noted. First, we are not to attempt to do God's work without all possible assistance from other believers. John R. Mott, the great lay Christian of the early decades of the present century, once said, "It is better to get twelve others to do the work of twelve people than to do it alone." Jesus knew this, and gave us the guidance we need today relative to it.

There is a fundamental principle here which goes right back to the policy of Almighty God. In the entire Biblical revelation, there is the constant disclosure that God's policy is to work through involvement with the finite souls which he has created. This explains why he decided to reveal himself through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It explains also why God determined to move toward the realization of his kingdom through the very stuff of history, namely, through the line of Abraham, through Moses and the prophets, and through Jesus Christ.

What if it were really true that God wants to carry forward his kingdom through every *believer*? What if it were really true that God has established the policy of forming the Church of Jesus Christ into a community of people called to witness in word and deed throughout the world? This seems to be what the Mas-

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ter has made clear to us by his own actions. It was his plan to win people through people.

Another lesson for us today is this. We are to follow the example of the Master in carrying out a carefully planned program of evangelism. We are to consider carefully where and when to go and where and when not to go.

We are to bear witness to the gospel of the kingdom of God which has been made accessible to every person through Jesus Christ. Whether we are laymen or ministers, there must be no uncertainty in what we say. Jesus made this clear to his disciples (Matt. 10:7). Paul insisted upon the same thing when he said, "If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?" (1 Cor. 14:7-8) Then, after developing this thought further, Paul says to the Christians at Corinth, "... strive to excel in building up the church" (14:12). All of this implies some careful training concerning what the nature of the gospel is and concerning the best ways to communicate it.

We are to be specifically informed about the people into whose homes and communities we go (see Matt. 10:11-14). We are to show practical good sense (10:16). This means, by implication, that at every step of the way we are to know what we are doing.

We are to be prepared in advance to encounter opposition and difficulties. Jesus did not have an easy time of it; nor did the apostles. And we today are not above our Teacher and Lord (see Matt. 10:24-25). Yet, in the midst of all opposition, we are to be as harmless as doves (10:16). In and through it all we are to be courageous (10:26, 28).

We are to go forth with the absolute assurance of the sustaining presence of God (Matt. 10:29-31). We never walk alone.

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Moreover, we are to bear witness in the sure knowledge that the Holy Spirit will honor and use our efforts. For "... he will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. . ." (Jn. 16:8). If, in doing the work of evangelism, we think of ourselves as the primary agents, we misunderstand the realities. The great work is done by the Holy Spirit who blesses our efforts. The Spirit illuminates the Biblical revelation. The Spirit probes the depths of the human heart and convicts people of sin. The Spirit enables people to understand and receive the Christian witness. The Spirit moves within the souls of men to magnify Jesus Christ as Lord (Jn. 16:14). The Spirit draws people into the fellowship of the Christian community. And the Spirit gives the inner assurance and the peace of God (Rom. 8:14-17; 2 Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:13-14). In short, it is the Holy Spirit who blesses our efforts with an abundant harvest.

It is no accident that the mighty fruit-bearing periods of the Christian witness have come out of those groups wherein the assistance of the Holy Spirit was clearly understood and profoundly felt. This is eminently true with reference to the earliest Christians after Pentecost. Great numbers were added to the kingdom by the power of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7).

One more lesson remains to be mentioned. We are to pray for an ever increasing number of effective witnesses and workers (Lk. 10:2). This means that all of our efforts must be undergirded with prayer. We are to pray for the lost, for those who have not entered into the joys of Christian living. We are to pray for those who go forth to do the work of evangelism. We are to pray that God will raise up increasing numbers of ministers and laymen who will respond to the call to participate effectively in the work of kingdom-building. And we are to be assured that God will answer the persistent prayers of his children.

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What were the main reasons for choosing the twelve disciples?
2. What facts convince us that Jesus had a planned program of evangelism?
3. How did Jesus use prayer as a part of his program of winning people?
4. Where does the work of the Holy Spirit fit into our efforts to draw others into the kingdom?

SOME SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS

1. Evangelism is a team activity; it is the work of every church member.
2. Effective evangelism is carefully planned.
3. Every effective method or plan is backed by prayer.
4. The Holy Spirit mightily uses the imperfect efforts of all who witness for Christ.

CHAPTER X

JESUS GAVE HIMSELF

More important than anything else in the Master's strategy of winning people was the fact that he gave himself. Back of every effort to deal with people was his unchanging determination to expend his life and energy for them. He came not to be served but to serve (Matt. 20:28). From the start of his public ministry Jesus recognized that he was born to share, to abandon, to give, to die in behalf of others.

The significance of this was rightly understood by Paul when he said: "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. . . . Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:3-8).

There is no single factor in Jesus' method of evangelism which more decisively explains his influence than this. We shall do well, therefore, to notice certain specific ways in which Jesus manifested this absolute determination to give himself in behalf of others.

1. Jesus Gave Himself in Prayer

Not as much is written in the Gospels about the prayer-life of Jesus as we should like to have for our guidance. This is in part because prayer is such an intimate experience that no one writing about it can put its deeper meaning into words. Besides this, Jesus did most of his praying when no one was

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around to make a report on it. Nevertheless, there are in the Gospels glimpses into the prayer-life of Jesus from which we may put together a much fuller picture of the Master's power of giving himself for others in prayer.

One such glimpse is given us in the accounts of the temptations of Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12, 13; Lk. 4:1-13). During this period we are told that he fasted forty days and forty nights (Matt. 4:2). And we can be sure that much of this time was spent in prayer. According to one writer, there was a great question confronting our Lord: "Was he to prove himself the Son of God by supernatural greatness or by sacrificial lowliness?" (A. E. Garvie, *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus*, pp. 132-33) In any event, immediately following upon those days and nights of temptation and prayer in the wilderness, the Master went out upon his mission of self-giving.

Another such glimpse is found in Matthew 14:23 where we read: "And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up into the hills by himself to pray" (see also Mk. 6:46). This one verse speaks volumes. The overwhelming need of the multitudes for whom he had expended his energies was upon his great heart. So he went off to himself into the hills to pour out his soul to the Father in their behalf. This same thought is suggested in Mark's Gospel where we are told that after ministering to the multitudes he went apart to pray. "And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed" (Mk. 1:35). From the account that immediately follows, we gather that he was praying not only for those to whom he had been ministering but also for those whom he was planning to serve in the "next towns" (Mk. 1:38).

Still another glimpse is furnished by Luke when he says, "In these days he went out into the hills to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God" (6:12). Even though the disciples were not permitted to be with the Master during these pro-

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longed periods of private prayer, they were sufficiently aware of his habits to know that he was a man of prayer. So it is not surprising to find one of the disciples coming to Jesus, after he had ceased praying, with the request: "Lord, teach us to pray. . ." (Lk. 11:1).

That all of these references to the prayer-life of Jesus indicate a recurring pattern or habit of prayer is seen in Luke 22:39-41 where we read that "he went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives. . ." for the purpose of praying.

But how can we be sure that he was praying primarily for others on all these occasions? First, the manner of his life and activity following upon these periods of prayer decisively indicate this. The quality of a person's prayer-life is always seen in the kind of deeds that flow from it. Second, the accounts in the Gospels frequently bear this out with absolute clarity. For example, when he heard of the death of John the Baptist he went apart to pray (Matt. 14:13). This means that the burden of a sinful world, which destroyed a righteous man like John, was upon his heart. On one occasion when the disciples wondered why they did not have the power to restore an epileptic boy, Jesus told them that it was because they lacked faith. Then, according to some ancient authorities, he went on to say, "But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17:20-21). This shows the direct bearing of the Master's prayer-life upon others. He interceded in their behalf continuously through prayer.

In order to enrich the lives of others, Jesus was particularly interested in helping them to identify himself as their Lord. So after he was praying alone he asked his disciples, "Who do the people say that I am?" (Lk. 9:18) He was in this way leading up to the question: "But who do you say that I am?" (9:20) This passage again discloses that out of his own periods

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of prayer there emerged the deep interest in giving himself for others.

One of the clearest indications of Jesus' use of prayer as intercession is seen in that incident when he said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Lk. 22:31-32). Here, by explicit word, we know that Jesus spent time and energy giving himself in prayer for others. It may well be that one of those nights spent in prayer was devoted entirely to intercession in behalf of Peter.

In the prayer of Jesus before the tomb of Lazarus we are given to know that he had already spent time and energy in prayer for the raising of this friend. For Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me" (John 11:41). The intercessory prayer had already provided the victory.

The only passage in the Gospels where we find a detailed statement of Jesus' prayer for others is in John 17. There the Master is quoted in his prayer for the disciples: "I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine; all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. . . . I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. . . . Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth" (Jn. 17:9-19). Then the Master goes on to say, "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who are to believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. . . ." (17:20-21).

The plain fact is that no other explanation of the prayer-life of Jesus is possible than that he was continuously giving himself in intercession in behalf of others. This is true to the pro-

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foundest possible extent in the Garden of Gethsemane when he prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). In that prayer he was already abandoning his life in order that sinners might be forgiven and thus share in the kingdom of God forever.

2. Jesus Gave Himself in Work

Nothing significant is ever accomplished without hard work. This is as true of evangelism as it is of anything else. In fact, the task of being an evangel, to which every Christian is called, is the most difficult and the most rewarding of all forms of work. Yet every Christian is given the grace to share in it.

Jesus became the example for his followers by expending his own energies in the work of the kingdom. We are apt to suppose that Jesus had so much supernatural energy that he did not become weary from his constant activity. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We must not, in the interest of sentimentality, deny the rugged realities of the gospel materials. We must never overlook the manhood of the Master. Even as a boy Jesus knew that he had to be about his Father's business (Lk. 2:49). Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, knew what it was to work with his hands.

On one occasion when his disciples offered him food, he said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (Jn. 4:34). When the religious leaders in Jerusalem questioned him about healing on the sabbath day, Jesus said, "My Father is working still, and I am working" (Jn. 5:17). Jesus spoke not only to the twelve but to all Christians when he said, "We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work" (Jn. 9:4).

Another verse which gathers up into itself, in the most far-reaching way, the deep things about Jesus is John 21:25. That

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verse, coming at the very end of John's Gospel, gives a true impression of the endless activities in which the Master gave himself in order to draw others into the kingdom. We read there: "But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

Again and again, after Jesus had been preaching, teaching, and healing, the multitudes still pressed upon him. He refused to turn them away. This is particularly evident in Matthew 14:13-23, in Mark 3:7-10, and in Lk. 9:10-11. From these passages we learn that even after Jesus had been working with people for prolonged periods, they would not leave him alone. They pressed him to the extremity of his energies. "For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat" (Mk. 6:31). And when Jesus and the twelve had to seek a place of rest, they went away in a boat. But the multitudes watched where they went and ran there on foot ahead of them. Though weary and hungry, the Master did not turn the multitudes away. "As he landed he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things" (Mk. 6:34).

There can be no doubt that the most significant factor in the influence of Jesus upon the individuals and multitudes was his readiness to spend his time, his energy, his very life in their behalf. He was willing to put himself out for them, to go to great pains in their service, to work in order that they might be blessed.

3. Jesus Gave Himself in Death

Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13). He knew that he came into the world to die. So at an appropriate time he "began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and

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suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (Matt. 16:21; see also 17:12; Mk. 8:31; Lk. 9:22).

This was so profound a part of the Master's understanding of his earthly mission that when Peter rebuked him saying, "This shall never happen to you," Jesus turned on Peter with a fierce denunciation, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Matt. 16:23) The Master could not allow anyone or anything to stand in the way of the fulfillment of his God-appointed redemptive work.

When Jesus had that last supper with the twelve he instituted the sacrament which fixes attention upon his death. "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matt. 26:26-28). The bread and the cup have ever signified for Christians the fact that Jesus came into the world to give himself in death.

The earliest Christians did not forget this, nor could they forget its tremendous significance. For they realized at last that deep within the heart of God something had taken place through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ which no tongue could adequately express. Yet they knew that even little children could get in on its benefits. Paul, in one of the earliest statements of the gospel that Christians preached, said this: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures. . ." (I Cor. 15:3). Elsewhere he makes very careful mention of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:23-26). So profound was the significance of the death of Jesus upon his followers that his Church for 2,000 years gratefully remembers his willingness to die for the sins of the whole world.

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The profoundest force that first moved within the hearts of those 120 followers who were gathered together in the upper room in Jerusalem was doubtless their memory of Jesus who gave himself in death in their behalf. With these recollections burning like divine flames within their souls, they were being prepared for the mighty experience of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit used the holy memory of Jesus' sacrificial life and death to prepare the group to receive the power from on high which sent them out to proclaim the Savior to the world. Jesus gave himself in death.

4. Lessons for the Church Today

From all of this three lessons of supreme importance for evangelism must be learned by Christians today.

First, there is not and cannot be any truly effective evangelism without intercessory prayer. Jesus not only prayed. He directed his prayers to God in behalf of others. He was very specific in praying for people. He did not pray for humanity in general but for Peter and James and John and Lazarus. He saw men in their sin and need, and he lifted them up to God in prayer. He felt the pangs of their privations and prayed for God to bless them. He beheld them as sheep without a shepherd and he interceded in their behalf through prayer.

A secular world is apt to say that in prayer we are letting our imagination play the fool with us; we are simply hypnotizing ourselves into believing a lot of silly things; or we are merely talking ourselves into the answers we want. To some people then, who think of themselves as rather clever and sophisticated, prayer has no place in the life of a sensible person. These clever fellows sit in the arm-chair and make bold pronouncements on the folly of prayer. But when we turn from them to the prayer-life of Jesus we become profoundly aware of having turned away from the superficial and foolish toward the profound and

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true. By his own life Jesus refutes all arguments against prayer. This is particularly true with regard to intercessory prayer. Jesus prayed for others. The one who prayed most profoundly for others has done the most for them.

There is a spiritual dimension of life into which most people never enter. Therefore, they are blind to the resources available in it. Those who possess the wisdom of this world usually miss it. So do the teeming multitudes. But Jesus showed us that there is this mighty spiritual realm which is open to all who will place themselves in the position to receive its power and benefits. Through those who are willing to enter the covenant of intercessory prayer, God gathers people into his kingdom.

This means that one of the major responsibilities of every Church, of every group of people who bear the name of Christ, is that of becoming *a community of intercession* in behalf of the lost, the needy, the lonely, the anxious, the despairing.

The earliest Christians knew this. Paul prayed for the churches which he founded (II Cor. 13:7-9; Eph. 1:15-17; Phil. 1:3-5; I Thess. 1:2-3). He prayed for particular individuals (Philemon 4). He constantly urged his Christian friends to pray for others (Rom. 15:30-32; II Cor. 1:11; Phil. 1:19; I Thess. 5:25; Philemon 22). Christian history proves that a praying Church is a growing Church. For out of the prayers of the people of Christ there inevitably arises the passion to bring others into the kingdom that they too might share in the joys of the Lord.

Another lesson for the Church today comes from the Master's willingness to give himself in work. He was eager to serve, willing to do difficult things, ready to spend time and energy. The pity of most people's lives is that they are always saving themselves for a crisis. They are afraid that something will happen to them; so they are bored to death. They are lost in

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empty living. Jesus worked in behalf of others. He labored to draw them into the kingdom.

True evangelism means the willingness to work at the task of winning people to Christ. It means taking time to be instructed, time to visit, time to share. It means the eagerness to discover those strategic moments in the lives of others when they seem most ready to open their hearts to God.

A third lesson is this. We have seen that Jesus gave himself in death. While we can never do in life and death what the Savior of the world has done for us, we can gather into our life something of the meaning of what he did. We are to think of ourselves as expendable for the glory of God and for his kingdom. When we cleave to our life it slips away into nothingness. When we abandon it to God and his kingdom we experience the joy of living. To live is to give. Jesus himself said, "For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mk. 8:35). Strange words; strangely true. The only way to know their truth is to enter into the joys of expendable living.

Moreover, this is the God-appointed way of winning people into the kingdom. He who is unwilling to make sacrifices cannot be a real evangel. For sacrifice in behalf of others awakens responsiveness in them. If we suffer with them, they are prepared by the Holy Spirit to respond to the word of God. Jesus suffered for all people. Each of us is called upon to suffer with and for only a few with whom we are permitted to have some real contact. The kingdom of God is being formed through those who suffer in Christlike love to win others.

Paul, that great evangel of the first century, knew all this when he said, "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:7-8). And when our time of wit-

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nessing and serving is done, we look with eagerness toward the privilege of participating with God and his gathered ones in the affairs of that great city whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). For there Jesus Christ shall reign in visible glory; and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord (Phil. 2:11).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What leads us to believe that Jesus gave himself in prayer for others?
2. What does God do through intercessory prayer?
3. Do the Four Gospels lead us to believe that Jesus worked hard to win others?
4. Why are the suffering and death of Jesus so effective in drawing people to him?

SOME SUGGESTED CONCLUSIONS

1. Others are won by those who make sacrifices in their behalf.
2. Others are won through persistent prayer for them. Those who pray for others usually do them the most good.
3. Others are won through hard work.
4. Others are won through abandoning ourselves in their behalf. To abandon means to give away without any expectation of recovering.

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